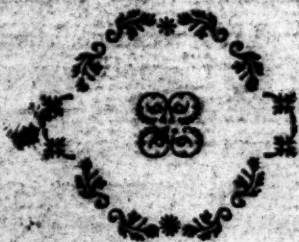


C O D R U S: K

A TRAGEDY.

Quis urbis conservatorem Codrum non maxime laudat?

TULL.



L O N D O N :

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard.

MDCCLXXIV.]

C O D R U S

A T R A G E D Y

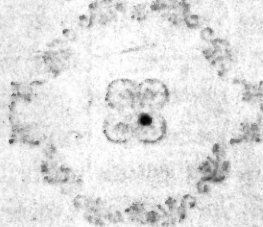


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L O N D O N

Printed by J. Johnson, No. 7, St. Paul's Church-Yard, London.

MDCCLXXXIII



[ iii ]

## D E D I C A T I O N.

To T— B—— B——, Esq. F.R.S.

DEAR SIR,

CARELESS of its fate, I now throw the following Tragedy into your hands. You have my full permission to suppress, or publish it, as you think proper. Should the latter be the case, I must beg leave to inform the Publick, that it was never intended for the Stage; that *I am far from thinking it theatrical*; and that it was written, in the midst of retirement, with no other view but that of amusing myself.——I have been flattered it is not without its beauties; but

—— *scripsisse pudet, quia plurima cerno,  
Me quoque, qui feci iudice, digna lini.*

I am sensible the versification is not quite so uniform and just as, perhaps, it ought to be; but I am not desirous of the name of Poet. The *Sermoni propiora*, the *Sermones repentēs per humum*, are the utmost of my ambition; and I am pleased to find the great *Corneille* requires no more, in dramatick poesy, than a versification ‘*aisée et élevée au dessus de la prose, mais non pas jusqu’à l’ensure du poëme epique.*’

The prose scene, at the beginning of the second act, is not necessary to the whole. If it be omitted the Play will still retain a proper length. I have been told that it is *low*, and sinks beneath the dignity which Tragedy requires; but I have been persuaded there is no impropriety in making the Plebeian speak in the same piece in which Heroes die, and Princes expire in the cause of Liberty; that the hill and the dale, the

mountain and the valley, are equally needful to relieve the satiety of the traveller.

It has been objected too, that a *Plot* is wanting. Simplicity with me has always been esteemed a beauty. If by a *Plot* be meant an intricacy of action, a striking series of surprising events, and marvellous incidents, I must own the force of the objection. The *Pantomime* falls fully in with the description; but I hope to shelter myself under *Dryden's* excellent definition: 'A Play,' says he, 'is a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.' I have but little to say in defence of what I have written; but I have endeavoured, as far as my abilities would allow me, to confine myself within the bounds prescribed by so great a master.

The scenes, where the King of *Sparta* is introduced, were inserted in pursuance of a friend's advice. He thought I wanted a villain in the play; and I have always with pleasure submitted to his censures. The tale I have chosen is so variously related, and the age of *Copdrus* so nearly approaches the times of fable, that I thought myself at liberty to deviate, as often as I pleased, from the legendary narratives of the ancients.

*Publica materies privati juris erit, si  
Nec circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem  
Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus*  
Interpres.—

I have killed the King of *Sparta*. His name I must leave to the investigation of some profounder Antiquary; but if I have offended against the laws of history, I hope at least to be excused for having done exact poetick justice.



## D E D I C A T I O N.

v

The story of the apparition, which, as *Plutarch* gravely tells us, visited *Brutus*, before the battle of *Philippi*, will, in some sort, apologize for the introduction of the *Spectre*. The age of *Codrus* was an age of superstition. The memorable actions of the ancients are for ever prefaced by prodigies and monsters; and I have more than once remarked the narrative of a ghost to have had no less an effect upon the ears of a *polite* than upon those of a ruder audience.

I have but one thing more to add in relation to the *manners*. I am told they are too modern—too modern for the times of *Codrus*. I am sensible that they are in some (though I hope not in many) places, different to the models handed to us; but I am apt to apprehend, that the voice of love, and perhaps the voice of heroism too, has at all times been the same. The representation of a *Græcian* Princess, smeared over by the accidents of culinary labour, would, at least upon a *British* Stage, be productive of disgust to the spectator.

If any thing I have written can tend to amuse either my Friends, or the Publick, I shall esteem my labour overpaid. I am, I wish to be unknown. I have chosen a life of privacy; and, should you resolve to give this trifle to the world, I can sincerely say with *Ovid*,

*Parvæ nec invidéo, sine me liber ibis in urbem.*

Believe me to be,

With the sincerest esteem,

Your most obedient,

Humble servant,

A D V E R-

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE Tragedy which is now submitted to the Publick, was, some years ago, very obligingly put into Mr. Garrick's hands, with a view to its representation, by a Gentleman to whom the Author is entirely a stranger. It is needless to add, that it was rejected. The decision of so great a judge of theatrical merit confirmed the Author in his opinion, that it was improper for the Stage. It was impossible for him not to acquiesce in a sentence to which his own preconceptions had told him he was liable; and he should have suffered his performance to have mouldered in the dust, had not his diffidence been conquered by some of his friends, to whom he thought he had no right to refuse a trifle of this nature. — The man who has once been shewn the door, makes his appearance again in company to the greatest disadvantage; but though the merit of his piece, as a dramatick entertainment, may not entitle it to regard, he flatters himself that it contains sentiments which will not be displeasing in a land which prides itself on being the peculiar residence of *Freedom*. The cause of *CODRUS* was the cause of *LIBERTY*; and it is hoped the Reader, who inherits the virtues of his generous ancestors, will accept with candour an attempt (however mean) at a display of *PATRIOTICK VIRTUE*.

October 30, 1773.

P R O.



## P R O L O G U E.

**BRITONS**—to-night our Author draws his Piece  
From the hoar rolls of once-illustrious *Greece*.—

*Greece* once was free; and if one spark remains  
Of patriot fire, still glowing in your veins,  
A *British* Bard solicits your applause  
To **CODRUS**, dying in his Country's cause.—

*Greece* once was free.—Those Halcyon days are o'er,  
*Greece* sighs in chains, and *Athens* is no more.

O'er moulder'd piles, the turban'd tyrant stands,  
And shakes the scourge with unrelenting hands.  
The trembling hind to his vile task is broke,  
Bows to his lash, and crouches to his yoke.—

The maid betroth'd, to abject slav'ry led,  
Is mark'd the pride of some rude conqueror's bed.—  
In vain the parent weeps—before his eyes  
One endless scene of desolation lies.—

*Greece* once was free!—her rights are all destroy'd,  
And iron crescents glare, where **CODRUS** greatly dy'd.—

Think, *Britons*, think! how thro' these favour'd isles  
Peace waves her wand, and godlike Freedom smiles.  
Beneath his oak, the jocund peasant lies,  
And sees around his plenteous herbage rise;  
For him, he sees the russet harvest mown;  
He views his sheep, their fleeces are his own:  
His beauteous dame is to the altar led,  
And no rude tyrant violates his bed.—

Hence cast your eyes.—Each neighbouring state review—  
Then think what blessings are possess'd by you.  
To guard such blessings, once by *Greece* enjoy'd,  
As *Britons* oft have done, the gen'rous **CODRUS** dy'd.

Dramatis

## P R O L O G U E

## Dramatis Personæ.

**CODRUS**, King of *Athens*.

**ADRASTUS**,

**MEDON**,

**THESEUS**, an Infant,

**THERSIPPUS**, an old Counsellor.

**THERSILOCHUS**, an *Athenian* Officer.

**PTERILAS**, the Envoy to *Delphos*.

**HIGH-PRIEST**.

The **KING** of *Sparta*,

**CALCHAS**, a *Spartan* Officer.

**OLYMPIO**,

**LAMPADIO**,

**TOXILUS**,

**ATALANTA**, Wife to **CODRUS**.

**JOCASTA**, Daughter to **THERSIPPUS**.

**CEPHISA**, Confidante to **JOCASTA**.

Augurs, Officers, Guards, Centinels, and Attendants.

*SCENE Athens, and the Neighbourhood.*



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# C O D R U S:

## A T R A G E D Y.

---

### A C T I.

*An inward Portico of the Palace.*

*The Scene opens, and discovers CODRUS with a Roll of  
Parchment, reading.*

WE all are children of one common parent,  
The common sharers of indulgent goodness!—  
[Closes the roll.]

These fruitful showers, which give our meads their verdure,  
Descend to bless the thirsty fields of Asia:

And yon gay sun, which shines to day on Athens,  
Shines too upon the swarthy sons of Africk.—

—So speaks the sage; but man, alas, is man.—

The brute, his wants supply'd, sinks down to rest;  
But full-gorg'd man, anxious for what he knows not,  
Sickens and pines when'er the solar ray

Illumes his neighbour's cottage —Be it so.—

These aged limbs again shall meet the storm,  
Perhaps retort the ruin aim'd against us;

At least this mossy trunk, white with decay,  
Shall, as it falls, strike down th' exulting Woodman.—

B

*Enter*

*Enter THERSIPPUS.*

My try'd Thersippus, how appear our troops?  
 Doth the hard helm hang easy on their brows?  
 Or do they sigh again for peace and indolence?

THERSIPPUS.

No.—Not a soldier wou'd exchange his arms,  
 His midnight watches, and his noon-day toil,  
 For all the downy beds of softest luxury.  
Before their tents, in crouds, they speak your praises;  
 They stile you patriot; call you friend and father;  
 Count o'er the blessings of your tender reign;  
 And, with impatience, chide the loit'ring combat.

C O D R U S.

Since first this fillet circled round my temples,  
 I've strove to be the father of my people.  
 Thro' a long reign I've found them not ungrateful.  
 There needs no Siren, warbling o'er my pillow,  
 To cheat the weary night; the echoing crouds,  
 Loud in their exultations, do it for me;  
 I hear their shouts, then sleep; awake, and hear them.  
 —Methought this morning promis'd me success.  
 My Atalanta smil'd upon her warrior,  
 And my young Theseus stretch'd his little hands  
 As joy'd to see me drest in arms for Athens.  
 Oh my Thersippus! I could play the father;  
 Dwell on the accents of his salt'ring tongue;  
 Tell thee how, pleas'd, he rode upon my sword,  
 Or gaz'd with silent wonder on my shield.  
 Yes: I cou'd hug the infant to my bosom,  
 Watch him whole days, play o'er his tricks of mimicry,  
 And know no joy but what attends the parent.—  
 Adrastus, and my Medon too, were there;  
 Unus'd to arms, they gaz'd upon each other,  
 Embrac'd, and vow'd perpetual faith to Athens.—

Ye



# A TRAGEDY.

3

Ye gods, may Sparta find them in the battle,  
And if a sword shou'd come athwart their breasts,  
Avert the blow, and save them for their country.

*Enter MEDON armed.*

MEDON.

Thanks to the gods, we've no ignoble quarry;  
Our foes appear the real sons of Sparta,  
Harden'd to war, and bred to strictest discipline.  
'Tis said their numbers must surpass our own,  
Enow for death, enow for flight and bondage.

CODRUS.

Numbers, believe me, in the hands of fate,  
Are but the sands of hot Numidia's deserts,  
Which one poor puff of morning's air can separate.  
I fear them not; tho', in the cause of virtue,  
They might indeed be dreaded; but, where murder,  
Where strange oppressions sink th' ungovern'd man,  
A bulrush strikes a giant's soul with terror.

*ADRASTUS enters.*

ADRASTUS.

A cloud of dust now sweeps along the plain,  
Far as the eye can ken: the spies report,  
The Spartan army hither bends its march;  
Already they divide the spoil, and think  
To sleep to night in Athens.

CODRUS.

Happy they,

Who in the times of blest primeval innocence,  
Knew not the inroads of the bold intruder,  
The nodding crest then grac'd no soldier's helmet;  
No written laws restrain'd the human mind;  
But all was virtue, harmony, and love.

B 2

Those

Those golden days, my sons, are now deny'd us.—  
 Let me embrace you, let me bless you both,  
 And give you joy of this your virgin armour.—  
 Those undrench'd plumes must feel the drizzling rain.—  
 Behave as not unworthy of your father.  
 True I'm a father, have a father's feelings,  
 Thro' youth have train'd you; yet I'd clasp you both,  
 Cold, lifeless carcases, within my arms,  
 Sooner than hear you were not both Athenians.—  
 Adrastus, Medon; tell me you can conquer.—  
 Tell me you'd rather feast the Spartan sword  
 Than live to see the shipwreck of your country.

A D R A S T U S.

This corse shou'd sooner be the prey of vultures,  
 I'd sooner grace the ruthless victor's chariot  
 Than hear it said, he valued not his country.—  
 My country!—If there be a pow'r in magick,  
 'Tis comprehended in that sacred word:  
 But what's a country freedom has deserted?  
 —Oft at your knees, even in my infant years,  
 As I've attentive stood to hear some tale  
 Of warriors bleeding to maintain their freedom,  
 My little heart has beat within my bosom:  
 Oft, in my dreams, I've started from my sleep,  
 And wild, as from the tumults of the battle,  
 I've cry'd in raptures, Victory and Athens.—  
 But, were I only to be aw'd by shame,  
 How cou'd I think to meet a father's frown,  
 To share a weeping mother's lov'd embrace,  
 Had I done ought unworthy of the soldier.  
 —Thou best of fathers, hear me whilst I swear: [*He kneels.*]  
 Ye gods, avengers, thus I call upon you:  
 If e'er I stoop to ought that's less than manhood;  
 If e'er these hands desert the cause of virtue;  
 May ev'ry light'ning hurl me to destruction.—

ME-



# A TRAGEDY.

5

MEDON.

Young as I am, I'd willingly pursue  
Where honour leads, and fame spurs on to action;  
My better brother will direct my way,  
And all my wish shall be, to tread his footsteps.

CODRUS.

This is indeed, my friend, to be the father:  
When my faint limbs have lost their wonted use,  
Thus to start-up again to second manhood:  
For what are years? what is enfeebling age?  
When all a parent's virtues, in his offspring,  
Hand down each wish'd-for blessing to posterity.  
Indeed, where vices flourish on the stock,  
Which kind indulgence, with paternal hand,  
Has planted, nurtur'd, rais'd to blast its hopes,  
There age is piercing cold; and shrinks to earth with sorrow.  
But, where the harvest brightens to the view,  
And the sun gilds the prospect all beyond us,  
Oh! how it glads imagination's eye  
To trace the glories of a future nation. —  
—Therippus, trench'd beneath our walls, we'll wait  
The answer of the god.—The chosen bands,  
Which hold our utmost posts, may well awhile  
Maintain themselves.—When Pterilas, return'd  
Shall bring Apollo's sacred mandate, that  
Shall guide our counsels; as it points we'll move,  
And either draw our forces to the field,  
Or bid the tempest thunder from our ramparts.—  
—As yet, Adrastus, the rude dress of war  
May hang but irksome; but the honest spear,  
The steel that guards the soldier's patriot bosom,  
Are ornaments to please even womens eyes,  
Beyond the loom's most gaudy gorgeous luxury.—  
—Medon, this day's thy infancy of service;

Thy

Thy giddy fallies I can well excuse,  
 The rankest weeds spring from the richest soils;  
 But reputation, the best flower of manhood,  
 Must be preserved by utmost assiduity.—  
 I doubt you not. I know you valiant both;  
 Yet discipline, in youth, may sometimes nod,  
 And relaxation, in one fatal moment,  
 Bring down more mischief than an age can answer.—  
 Go and survey the trenches. See each man  
 Alert, as if destruction's ugliest form  
 Had seiz'd upon his buckler; for in war,  
 The azure morn portends no constant sunshine;  
 But oft the whistling whirlwind sweeps along  
 When least expected.—Go, at your return  
 You'll find me in the citadel.

[*Exeunt Adrastus and Medon.*]

A boding something tells me all is well,  
 And Athens yet shall rise in arts and arms  
 Above her peers.

*Enter JOCASTA and CEPHISA.*

As yet I see, my fair,  
 You court your pleasures in the morning's breeze,  
 The clank of arms, the rivetting of harness,  
 Can be to you but an unwelcome musick.  
 The tender voice of softly-fighting dalliance  
 You must dispense with, whilst in yon rude field  
 Your dusty loves shall merit all your favours.

JOCASTA.

Think not, dread sir, that 'cause our feeble limbs  
 Refuse the warriour's office, we want hearts,  
 Want feelings for our country. All our prayers,  
 The prayers of virgin innocence, are ever pour'd  
 To heav'n for blessings on our king and Athens.

CODRUS.



# A TRAGEDY.

**CODRUS.**  
My fair I thank you.—'Tis, Thersippus, time  
To meet our friends; I've order'd their attendance.—  
Let us not wait, lest the dull hand of indolence  
Shou'd usher in misfortune.

[*Exeunt Codrus and Thersippus.*]

**CEPHISA.**

Jocasta,  
The ears of friendship listen to the tale,  
And honour's firmest signet guards the secret.

**JOCASTA.**  
Woman to woman may unfold her weakness.—  
There, where Ilyssus scarcely moves his stream,  
Nigh where the poplars, waving o'er the bank,  
Witness the amorous turtles constant cooing,  
I stole my morning's walk. The birds, methought,  
The feather'd choir, that morn made sweeter melody;  
Each bush breath'd odour, and each opening flower  
Dispensed a glow of more than common brightness.  
There, there I met Adrastus.—

**CEPHISA.**  
The clear stream,  
The dooing turtles, and the waving poplars,  
Romances say, are ever kind to lovers.  
What said Adrastus? The first forms of love  
Must bear an awkward, bashful kind of modesty.

**JOCASTA.**  
Thoughtless of love, I walk'd. The wanton herds  
Which crop'd the verdure of the neighbouring plain,  
The rural musick of the pastoral pipe,  
Alone employ'd my musing. There, Cephisa,  
Fast by the river's side I saw Adrastus.  
His step was measur'd, and his pensive eye  
Gaz'd on the ground, with an unusual sadness.

By

By fits he stop'd ; but still seem'd lost in thought,  
'Till near approach'd, (me unobserv'd) he cry'd,  
With more than common transport—my Jocasta!—

CEPHISA.

Thus the blind wanton oft reveals his secrets:  
The guardless sigh, the side-long glance betrays  
The ill-mask'd soul of wishful meditation.—  
Tell on your tale.

JOCASTA.

Sudden, a crimson glow  
Added, he since has told me, to my charms.  
I wou'd have 'scap'd unseen ; but my fond feet  
Seem'd with reluctance to perform their office.  
He heard my tread, and starting from his thought,  
Fix'd as a marble statue to its base,  
A moment gaz'd upon me. Then, confus'd,  
Came near and falter'd. His full breast seem'd big  
With words too great for utterance. Low he bow'd,  
But sweetly spoke such meaning with his eyes  
As, oh, Cephisa, had more pointed eloquence  
Than all the schoolman's softest, smoothest language.

CEPHISA.

So the lur'd lark gives up its wonted freedom.—  
Had some astrologer that morning told you,  
Your breast e'er noon shou'd feel the warmth of love,  
The conj'ror's magick had been ill requited.

JOCASTA.

True, true, Cephisa : but in womens bus'ness,  
No sage Egyptian, fraught with all his lore,  
Can answer for a day, an hour, a minute.  
A moment sets the lover's torch on fire,  
And, in the hands of half our fickle sex,  
As soon the glowing firebrand is extinguish'd.—  
Adrastus sigh'd. That sigh went thro' my soul,



# A TRAGEDY.

91

Soft as the breeze which wantons o'er the mead  
To steal its fragrance. Gently he seiz'd my hand.  
His touch spoke something far beyond description;  
Not the wild tumult of ungovern'd passion,  
But manly love in league with infant innocence.  
I started back, and wou'd have look'd a frown;  
For 'tis the task of women—tyrant custom  
Has told us ev'ry female's tongue must lie,  
And made a kind of virtue of hypocrisy.  
He bow'd, protested, kneel'd to beg my pardon;  
Own'd what he call'd his views of much ambition;  
Swore I was fairer than the opening morn,  
When from the eastern hills, the rising sun  
Glads wakening nature with unclouded lustre.

CEPHISA.

You heard his wond'rous tale?

JOCASTA.

My virgin head  
Hung like the poppy, charg'd with too much moisture,  
Confus'd I stood.—He paus'd awhile, then said,  
If love, Jocasta, pure as new-fall'n snow,  
If the fair prospect of th' Athenian diadem,  
Are presents, fair one, worthy your acceptance,  
Jocasta's smiles will make the toils of war  
Less irksome. The plant of love was rooted.  
I ey'd Adrastus, and the name of war  
Ran like a chilly tremor thro' my veins.  
I knew not why. Yet then I almost wish'd  
The crested helmet, and the plaited steel,  
Might ne'er inclose the limbs of my Adrastus.

CEPHISA.

How soon the little god had made his conquest!  
But when his arrows thus are tip'd with gold,  
Alas! Jocasta——

C

JOCASTA.

JOCASTA

Crowns have their charms.

Perhaps ambition's ev'ry woman's foible;  
 But, my Cephisa, was Adrastus poor  
 As the rude tenant of the lowliest cottage,  
 'T wou'd be my joy to dress his humble food,  
 And add my sonnets to his rural musick.  
 Unspotted love to wealth pays no obedience;  
 'Tis sordid avarice bids the hand of plenty  
 Perfume the pill, wou'd else be most disgusting.  
 But my Adrastus has ten thousand charms,  
 Which, even in poverty, wou'd give him rank  
 Supreme above his fellows. Doth not Athens?  
 Doth not each hoary, venerable sire,  
 That watches for his country, tell his virtues?  
 Then too, Cephisa, think a woman's feelings.  
 The pictur'd deities, which grace our temples,  
 Strike not our eyes with half such manly eloquence;  
 And, when he moves, his every limb persuades  
 With all the rhetorick of sinewy beauty.  
 Cou'd I refuse to listen to his tale?  
 I own'd him not indifferent. Term reserv'd,  
 To save a blush, and speak a woman's fondness.

CEPHISA

Each Grecian matron will applaud your choice;  
 But princes wear their crowns on hard conditions;  
 Their fondest dreams of highly-flattering happiness,  
 Are by ambition, and the countless arts  
 Of low-priz'd, court-bred cunning oft defeated.  
 We lesser folks have no such rooks to fear;  
 No council meets to canvass our pursuits,  
 To bid the God, in vain, to speed his shafts,  
 Or smother out the torch which love has lighted.

JOCASTA.



# A TRAGEDY.

11

JOCASTA.

Oh wound me not with such too low suspicions;  
Love can itself inspire a thousand doubts  
Without assistance. The king, Cephisa,  
Doats on Adrastus, with paternal fondness;  
He too has lov'd. In Atalanta, own'd  
A breast not senseless to the power of beauty.

CEPHISA.

Codrus has lov'd; but age forgets the feelings  
Of vigorous manhood. When the sportive blood  
Spurs on the soul no more to amorous conflict;  
The hours, when Cupid triumph'd, are forgotten.  
Prudence resumes the reins usurp'd by passion;  
The good and evil of each choice is pois'd  
With nicest scale, and every step we tread  
Is measur'd by the line of circumspection.—  
Statesmen have schemes beyond a common reach.—  
Has yet Adrastus own'd his love to Codrus?  
Is yet the senate met? The cloud of war,  
This storm which hovers o'er th' Athenian bulwarks,  
Admits no room for tales of love and dalliance.

JOCASTA.

War, war, Cephisa, strikes my soul with horror.  
Adrastus longs to grasp the laurel wreath  
Upon yon bloody field; and oh, Cephisa,  
In battle virtue's oft of little moment.  
The wild promiscuous ruin of the combat,  
The coward's dart, shot from inglorious distance,  
May hurl to dust, to ruin—my Adrastus.

CEPHISA.

Yet shou'd Adrastus meanly skulk from danger,  
Were he, in war, a niggard of his person,  
Jocasta cou'd not wish again to see him.

## J O C A S T A.

Oh name it not, Were my Adrastus dead,  
 Jocasta too must sink to earth with sorrow.  
 But yet he must, Adrastus must in arms.—  
 He will, where e'er the thickest tempest falls,  
 Make mock of death, and wrestle with destruction.—  
 Oh, my Cephisa, in the dint of action  
 A common soldier shares a common fortune ;  
 But the brave general, at the battle's head,  
 Must, by example, animate his troops,  
 And face a tenfold danger.—My dearest friend,  
 The very thought almost o'erpowers my reason,

## C E P H I S A.

'Tis thus, Jocasta, fondness makes us brood  
 O'er all the gloomy landskip of misfortune.—  
 Think you behold the hero now returning  
 With full-fledg'd conquest perch'd upon his helm,  
 Say, say, Jocasta, wou'd not such a sight  
 Fix your affections more, in one short moment,  
 Than wou'd an hundred years of useless indolence ?

## J O C A S T A.

Yes, yes, Cephisa, language wants expression  
 To speak the transports such a sight must give me.—  
 He must, he shall, he cannot shame his kindred.  
 The launce, which glitter'd in old Codrus' hand,  
 In his shall reek again with crimson honours.  
 Nay, my Cephisa, were incentives wanting,  
 I'd bid the soldier go deserve my favours.—  
 But yet, a woman's terrors hang about me ;  
 E'er now I've seen the gay parade of war,  
 And gaz'd on nodding crests with female fondness :  
 But, since Adrastus whisper'd first his love,  
 The burnish'd helmet, and the plaited mail,  
 Shoot thro' my soul, I know not what of horror.

## C E P H I S A.



# A TRAGEDY.

13

CEPHISA.

Were love, Jocasta, freed from all anxiety,  
The luscious draught wou'd be too much for mortals.  
The sportive god in ev'ry cup he deals  
Mingles distrusts, and jealousies, and cares.  
Honey and gall are pour'd into the bev'rage,  
And you, like others, must receive the potion.

JOCASTA.

Heav'n grant the gall don't hold too large proportion.—  
Yon ancient tower, the midnight owl's retreat,  
Whose venerable sides the ivy mantles,  
Commands a prospect of the neighbouring plain.  
Thence we, perhaps, amidst the crouded lines  
May ken the labours of my much-lov'd warrior;  
At least there offer up a prayer to heav'n,  
A fervent prayer, for Athens and Adrastus.

[Exeunt.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT

## A C T II.

## SCENE the Spartan Camp.

*Enter OLYMPIO and LAMPADIO.*

OLYMPIO.

THOU read'st the proclamation?

LAMPADIO.

I did. The king talks much of justice—the justice of our cause: And so there may be justice, politically considered, I'll not deny it:—But as to moral justice 'tis another matter.—Was I to quarrel with my neighbours, upon no better provocation than we do with Athens, I shou'd be laid by the heels for't.

OLYMPIO.

These things are above our reach: Let men of learning handle them. I understand them not. I once hear'd Pleusides, the orator, undertake to prove that black was white, he did so,—prov'd it plainly. That the sun shines at midnight,—he did that too. These men are always retain'd about the palace. If the king only dreams of bloody noses they have reasons enow to support him.

LAMPADIO.

But which of them ventures his scone in defence of his arguments?—Whilst thou and I are carved into minc'd-meat, that very fellow will be sitting by his fire with his books in his hand, cutting out work for those who have nothing to do, but to run their heads against stone-walls for their prince's pleasure.—'Tis my business to scour my armour, and keep my sword sharp, or I know whose back must pay for it.

OLYMPIO.

Wou'd princes might fight their own battles, say I.—When I was young, I remember how the neighbours  
prais'd



prais'd me—the boy is a fine boy—he grows bravely—he'll be a man in time, I warrant him.—My father simper'd, and was pleas'd with their commendations. Yet this very growth has been my misfortune. My first son may be a giant; but, for my own part, I am resolv'd to get none but dwarfs for the future.

## LAMPADIO.

Cou'd our philosophers teach thee the art, I shou'd think thee much in the right on't.—Before I had hear'd one word of war, up comes a lusty fellow with a huge horse's tail on his coxcomb. He carelessly twirls me round between his finger and his thumb, and turning about, sneeringly to his companion, whispers, but loud enough to make me hear and tremble, this fellow will make no bad figure with a pike run thro' him. Hark you, friend, how tall are you? Hang such friendship, say I; I have no relish for it; I made the least on't; stoop'd plaguily in the shoulders, and dwindled myself down to some five feet ten. Heaven forgive me for lying to no sort of purpose. The captain trusted his eyes. He wou'd take no man's word. He examined my mouth, and asked me how old I was; described my person to a tittle, and misspelt my name in a piece of musty parchment, where I was muster'd with thieves, freemen indeed, but thieves of all complexions. My wife wept bitterly. My children were in tears. The captain laugh'd, talk'd much to me about fame, and the justice of our cause; whistled the end of a tune; swore, by Jupiter's conjunction with Alcmena, half a score of times to no manner of purpose, and order'd a soldier to conduct me to his quarters. There was I branded in the hand, strip'd naked as I was the minute the midwife received me, twisted and turned for the discovery of marks, the mole upon my buttock was not omitted. Day after day was

was I parched in the sun like a galley slave, under the load of an old rusty buckler, for the time was short, and discipline, I was told, was necessary. I was ten times an hour threatned with the lash for nothing, had now and then a broken pate, because my officer was scarce out of leading-strings, and whenever I came to the forum, was tantaliz'd, by the old women, with the praises of Spartan liberty. This, this is liberty worth fighting for, is it not Olympio?

OLYMPIO.

Liberty, with a pox! No.—Yes, 'tis liberty; I dare not say it is not. The decree against mutiny has made it so, and I will not oppose authority.—We are too loud, Lampadio. There were three fellows hang'd yesterday for only presuming to think they liv'd comfortably before the war began.

*Enter* TOXILUS.

TOXILUS.

I think, Lampadio, you were absent at roll-calling, you have heard the news.

OLYMPIO.

'Twas my luck to keep guard with Lampadio. We have scap'd for once. We cou'd just discern the enemies outposts. But what news talk'st thou of?

TOXILUS.

Riddles, Olympio, riddles. The order of the day, not to touch the person of king Codrus on pain of death and confiscation of effects. An order deliver'd out by his majesty's supreme authority, and of which no one knows the reason.

LAMPADIO.

Methinks this is an order pacifick. Not to touch, mightily denotes peace. But is the order, think'st thou, reciprocal?



reciprocal? Has there been any such thing read in the Athenian camp? What were the words? The words, Toxilus?

TOXILUS.

Thus was it read, or my memory grows consumptive. It is his majesty's express command, that no officer or soldier, shall upon any pretence whatever, not even during battle, attempt against the life of the king of Athens. This is mysterious. Your scholar may fathom it; but I've no skill in conjecture.

OLYMPIO.

Not kill the king! For what were we muster'd? Why were we brought together? Perhaps the monarchs have made private articles; and only the underwoods are to be lopp'd at present.

TOXILUS.

Fie! fie! Olympio, this is downright treason. Our captains have eyes and they must lead us. 'Tis for the publick good, or shou'd be so. The publick good is every thing. Eating, drinking, and sleeping, are included in it. I have been deaf, blind, and dumb, ever since the roll-keeper scribbled my name, Toxilus, except when I have received orders to be otherwise. 'Tis my duty to be so. Thou see'st that post. That post's a soldier. 'Tis set there it knows not why, but there it must remain, till he that put it down, or a stronger hand, chuses to remove it. The order's a good order, tho' I don't know its meaning.

LAMPADIO.

For my part I am no politician. My father was a great one. He'd have explain'd you reasons of state, whilst he patch'd you a foot-soldier's jacket. God grant I ben't of doubtful genealogy.

D

TOXILUS.

**POXILUS.**  
 Let's into our tent, I have something to rejoice us.  
 Thou never knew'st a drunken fellow that had any defect  
 in his eyesight. [Exeunt.]

*SCENE an Apartment in the Citadel.*

**Enter CODRUS and THERSIPPUS.**  
**THERSIPPUS.**

Each trusty spy that lurks about their camp,  
 And ev'ry truant from the Spartan host,  
 Fully confirms the tidings.

**CODRUS.** The grisly wound,  
 Deep printed in the chieftain's breast, was thought  
 By every soldier once his best achievement.

But thus with care to spread from tent to tent,  
 At all events, to spare the king of Athens,  
 Is something most uncommon.

**THERSIPPUS.** I must own,  
 In all the musty rolls of hoar antiquity,  
 There stands no instance like it upon record.

**CODRUS.** They cannot think that I can meanly live  
 To drag in glorious shackles o'er the heaps,  
 The mould'ring ruins of our smoking temples,  
 To stand the gaze, the taunt of Spartan women,  
 The sport of boys, whilst, to encrease my train,  
 In mimic pomp, the shipwreck of my court,  
 My wife, and the poor remnant of my friends  
 Drag gilded chains, to please a gaping populace.—  
 I've tasted life, and I know all its value;  
 'Tis virtue, reputation, or 'tis nothing;

**THERSIPPUS.**

**'Tis**



# ACT IV. SCENE I.

69

\*Tis but the villain's curse; and I, my friend,  
Have learnt to live,—to die, with spotless honour.

**THERSIPPUS.**  
The very Spartan must revere your virtues.

**CODRUS.**  
Thy honest friendship draws thee into flattery —  
This specious tale, this fair pretext of friendship,  
This kind regard, Thersippus, to my person,  
Conveys some deadly poison in its smile  
Meant but to rankle deeper. — This is clear,  
The arrow's drawn that's pointed with destruction,  
And all the rest is mystery. Time, my friend,  
The tell-tale time, will soon reveal its meaning. —  
—Wait here Adrastus; and, at his return,  
Tell him he'll find me in the ozier'd walk,  
Where Atalanta train'd his infant steps,  
And taught his scarce-loos'd tongue the lore of virtue.

*Exit Codrus.*

**THERSIPPUS.**  
Ask the next croud that gathers in the streets;  
And ev'ry wheel, and ev'ry spring of Sparta  
Is seen as clear, by some mechanick patriot,  
As is the pole-star, when no envious cloud  
Obstructs its view from watching weary mariners.  
But yet this tale brings with it so much error,  
Such complicated doubt, that my weak senses  
Are lost in painful, fruitless meditation.

*Enter CEPHISA.*

**CEPHISA.**  
Alas! good Sir, Jocasta —

**THERSIPPUS.**  
What of her?  
Does my Jocasta live? Those haggard eyes  
Speak something of a terror most unusual.

# CEPHISSA.

Yet she lives;  
But, oh! how long her quiv'ring lips shall move,  
They who have felt the agonies of love,  
And seen a lover murder'd in their presence,  
Alone, alone can tell you.

HERSIPPUS.

Still I'm lost!

Rack me no longer with suspense. Cephisa,  
I've learnt to bear affliction,

CEPHISSA.

Once the prince,

Adraustus, fondly doted on Jocasta:  
'Tis now too late to keep the tale a secret.  
Jocasta's urn must follow her Adraustus.

HERSIPPUS.

I'm all amazement! Is Adraustus dead!

Jocasta, say't thou! Oh most wretched parent.

And did Adraustus love! By heav'n how happy

Cou'd I have liv'd to call the prince my son!

Cou'd I have liv'd—unfortunate Adraustus!

Poor, dear Jocasta!—I'm prepar'd, Cephisa;

The keenest pang can pierce my soul no deeper,

CEPHISSA.

Led on by love, we visited the tower

Whose mould'ring turrets overhang the wall.

Thence we survey'd the plain. Jocasta's hopes

Promis'd at least a glimpse of her Adraustus.

Distant, a dusty cloud swept o'er the field.

We mark'd its progress. It disclos'd a troop,

Sent as to view the bulwarks of our camp.

We saw the prince, Adraustus, from the lines

Draw out a band, slender, as scorning vantage.

Both sides advanc'd, till, on the battle's edge,

The



# A TRAGEDY.

21

The troops were halted. From each adverse front  
Adrastus and the Spartan met each other.  
Jocasta's very soul glow'd in her eyes,  
A pallid tremor seiz'd upon her lips,  
And heav'n or hell were center'd in that moment.

Alas, Adrastus!

CEPHISA.

Instantly they clos'd,  
We saw them fall, clasp'd in each other's arms,  
We saw the Spartan groveling o'er his body.  
We heard the shout, th' accursed shout of victory.  
Jocasta shriek'd, and stagg'ring to my arms,  
Just as she fell, her soul breath'd out, Adrastus.

THERSIPPUS.

Is she then dead?

CEPHISA.

As yet, good Sir, she lives,  
Her languid pulse, scarce trembling at her heart,  
Awhile resumes, and then deserts its office.  
But now she breath'd. She almost op'd her eyes,  
Then heav'd a sob, and sunk again to nothing.

THERSIPPUS.

Lead, lead me to her. 'Tis, Cephisa, hard  
For age to quit its tenderest last endearment.  
To see this flower, the only one was left me,  
Just in full bloom, with ev'ry leaf expanded,  
Shrivel'd away, and, oh, for ever blasted.—  
Lead, lead me to her. — But my sov'reign comes,  
And I must lull the parent in my breast;  
Must stem the torrent of too sharp affliction,  
And lend a lenient hand to his distresses.

Re-enter

## CODRUS:

*Re-enter CODRUS.*

CODRUS.

Something, Therippus, has been doing yonder.  
 As yet no news has reach'd me from the camp, till  
 But a rude rumour runs throughout the city,  
 Which first, 'tis said, took life upon the walls,  
 As if a Spartan troop had been discomfited.

THERIPPUS.

Alas, my liege,

CODRUS.

Therippus, why dejected?

The brave man's remedy's within himself;  
 And many a state, of less renown than Athens,  
 Has, on the rock of courage, stood a storm  
 More boist'rous far than this with which we're threat'ned,

THERIPPUS.

Truth does but late approach the thrones of princes,  
 But kings, like subjects, must sustain their sorrows.—  
 Is there a place within your royal breast  
 Where that dread scorpion grief can rankle deepest;  
 One single happiness, above the rest  
 Most eminently blissful?—Oh, my lord,  
 Think on that happiness, and learn to bear  
 That greatest, noblest blessing wrested from you.—  
 Think, Sir, Adrastus, vanquish'd, and—no more.

CODRUS, *after a pause.*

My son, Therippus, was, like others, mortal.—  
 If he with steady foot has run his race,  
 He has done more, in his few years of being,  
 Than he who spins out life's extremest thread  
 At last to deviate from the paths of honour.—  
 But 'tis, my favourite, much the part of wisdom;  
 Not to let credence float upon the wing  
 Of every novel gives the croud amusement.



No courier has arriv'd, no certain tidings.—

Had it been so, the news e'er this had reach'd me.

**THERSIPPUS.**

Alas, dread Sir, Jocasta and Cephisa,  
Bear but too certain, and too fatal tidings.  
The prince, Sir, lov'd.

**CODRUS.**

I knew and I approv'd it:

I know he fondly doated; oft I've seen it.

His honest eyes reveal'd full well his passion,

Whilst his too cautious lips conceal'd it from me.

Jocasta's charms, her many, many virtues,

Have made me often wish, my friend, in secret,

On such a plant to graft so fair a scion.

**THERSIPPUS.**

'Tis now too late. One common bier may hold them,

One common tomb may mingle both their ashes.

Jocasta saw her wish'd-for lover fall,

And the same wound, which pierc'd the prince's breast,

Thrill'd thro' her own with more than mortal anguish.

Her pallid cheeks resign their wonted bloom,

She dies, alas, to join their souls for ever.

*Enter* **THERSILOCHUS.**

**THERSILOCHUS.**

Great Sir, Adrastus—

**CODRUS.**

I have hear'd the tidings:

Doth he yet live? unfold your message briefly.

**THERSILOCHUS.**

He greatly lives! He lives to be immortal!

Amidst the shouts of all your friends he comes.

The voice of triumph sounds throughout the camp,

And ev'ry tongue is busied by his virtues.

**THIR.**

THERSIPPUS.

Haste, haste, Cephalis, hasten to Jocasta.  
Tell her he lives, he lives to make her happy.

[Exit Cephalis.]

I interrupt you; but, my lord, remember  
Jocasta is the only comfort left me.  
The only stay to prop my feeble years,  
And may, perhaps, ev'n now be ravish'd from me.

C O D R U S.

The prince shall fondly thank your pious care.—  
How far'd my boy? Did he acquit him nobly?  
The whole important act minutely tell me.

THERSILOCHUS.

In vain my rhetoric wou'd attempt to praise him.

To see him was to wonder, and amazement  
Shook hands with rapture thro' our little corps,  
Whilst he perform'd such prodigies of valour,  
As future heroes, happy in their actions,  
Shall blush to hear recorded. From the camp  
A troop detach'd. The flower of Lacedæmon,  
Skirted at little distance round our bulwarks.  
Adrastus view'd them. And shall these, he cry'd,  
Traverse the plain, whilst we, ignobly coupl'd,  
Depend upon our ramparts for our safety?

His eyes flash'd light'ning. From the lines he chose  
A small, but vet'ran band, such on whose swords  
A man might lay that greatest pledge, his honour,  
And ne'er repent the bargain. From the trench  
Silent they march'd, till coming near their foes,  
The Spartan troop was halted. Thro' our camp  
Each soldier's soul was posted in his eyes,  
When sallying from the ranks, the adverse chief,  
Alone advanc'd, with many a bitter-taunt  
Challeng'd our general out to single combat.

He



He spoke his rank, and blazon'd out his lineage,  
 Rich with the blood of many a scepter'd chieftain.  
 Tall was his stature, and the polish'd steel  
 Turn'd back the solar ray from ev'ry limb.  
 A lion's shaggy skin hung o'er his shoulders,  
 And round his casque its wide-extended jaws  
 Seem'd yet to menace on its foes destruction:  
 Adrastus paus'd, and with uplifted hands  
 Sent a short fervent pray'r to heav'n for Athens,  
 Then unappall'd he rode along the battle,  
 Charging each soldier, as he knew his duty,  
 Not even to save him on the verge of death,  
 On no condition to desert his station,  
 The foe dismounted, and alike your fort  
 Disdainful of the chance his courser gave him.  
 Not two Numidian tygers, fierce with hunger,  
 E'er met with half the rage. Their falchions blaz'd,  
 And o'er their shields alternate ruin pour'd,  
 On ev'ry moment expectation hung;  
 When the false traitor blade Adrastus bore  
 Prov'd traitor to its trust, and shiv'ring wide,  
 Bespread the plain with glitt'ring faithless fragments.  
 Instant they clos'd. Their bodies seem'd united.  
 They fell that moment, and the chance of battle  
 Threw your young warrior underneath his foe.  
 The Spartan shout like thunder went to heav'n,  
 Whilst thro' our troop dejection dull'd each eye,  
 And silent grief spread gloom o'er ev'ry visage.  
 Awhile they struggled, till Adrastus seiz'd  
 The poignard pendant from the Spartan's side,  
 And 'twixt the joinings of the plaited mail  
 Return'd it home. The soldier's eyes, convuls'd,  
 Swam in the midst of death. His breath now falter'd,  
 When drawing out again the reeking blade,

Again Adrastus plung'd it in his bosom;  
 The shriek of horror ran throughout their phalanx.  
 Forgetful of that sacred solemn seal,  
 Which honour, sterling honour, only stamps  
 Upon the gen'rous soldier's spotless bosom;  
 Confus'd and wild they rush'd upon Adrastus,  
 In hopes to tear his trophies from his grasp,  
 And stain their sabres by unequal combat;  
 The Spartan gave him arms. He stood their onset:  
 Repay'd their strokes with most unusual interest:  
 Still where he mov'd the edge of adverse battle  
 Seem'd dull'd and blunted. On his single arm  
 The god of carnage might erect an empire.  
 We only gather'd in the well-reap'd harvest,  
 Where e'er our squadron wheel'd its little front,  
 We trac'd the crimson footsteps of Adrastus.  
 The port of death we found already open,  
 And grizly-gasping victims mark'd the rout,  
 The glorious track he pointed out to conquest.  
 Our foes dispers'd, resign'd themselves to slaughter,  
 Despair triumphant had depress'd their hearts,  
 And an ignoble flight was all their safety.

C O D R U S.

Say on; Adrastus——

T H E R S I L O C H U S.

Ever greatly glorious,  
 Resign'd the reins of rage to his humanity.  
 Amo'gst the heaps, the chief of Lacedaemon,  
 Yet almost breathing, seem'd to menace slaughter.  
 His auburn locks were fill'd with clotted gore,  
 And trampling horses had deform'd his visage.  
 Adrastus view'd him, and, adown his cheek,  
 A trickling tear flow'd for a conquer'd enemy.  
 Insult, he spoke, wou'd only stain our triumphs;

His



His crest, his shield, his arms, are mine by conquest;  
 But he has, doubtless, friends to mourn his death,  
 That wish to pour their sorrows o'er his ashes.  
 Convey him hence, with honours to their camp,  
 And let his bloody shield be borne before him.—  
 Trophies are but the gewgaws of ambition,  
 And he, who does his duty to his country,  
 Will find his bliss in self-applauding virtue.

## CODRUS.

This draught of joy, believe me, my Therisippus,  
 More than o'er pays each anxious tort'ring moment  
 Since first this cloud from Sparta hover'd o'er us.  
 This morning's action in Jocasta's breast  
 Will doubly rivet her yet young affections.  
 His maiden shield, e'er this was void of honour,  
 Like the strain'd canvass ready for the pencil,  
 And yet untouch'd by any herald's finger.  
 But now the virgin may receive her lover,  
 Esteem him from the noblest, best of motives,  
 As one who dares, in the foul face of danger,  
 Expose himself to benefit his country.  
 As one, who 'midst affliction's bitterest hurricanes,  
 Alone, and unsupported by the world,  
 Can face a storm, and shield a woman's frailty.

## THERSIPPUS.

Perhaps, my liege, Jocasta's tender breast  
 May beat no longer for her lov'd Adrastus.  
 Your's and your country's joys affect me deeply.  
 I know your goodness, and my heart o'erflows  
 With more than filial gratitude towards you.  
 But yet a father has a father's feelings.  
 Perhaps, my infant may require this hand  
 To close those eyes were once my greatest comfort.—

## E. 2

Your

Your soul has felt, too often felt the parent,  
To blame the piercing throes of fond anxiety.

[Exit Therisippus.]

C O D R U S.

Go, tell the pleasing tale to Atalanta,  
She claims a mother's right to share my ecstasy.

[Exit Therisilochus.]

Trumpets. Enter A D R A S T U S.

But see he comes, let me embrace my warrior.  
Let these old limbs, enervate with decay,  
Press his heroick bosom to my own.  
My son, my soldier; doubly, doubly welcome.  
The ties of nature are by virtue strengthen'd.  
The sighing parent feels within his breast  
A kind of gen'rous sympathetic fondness,  
Even when he sees the prodigal return.  
But thus to meet thee crown'd with ev'ry honour,  
With ev'ry soul in Athens much thy debtor,  
Believe thy father, is ecstatic transport.

A D R A S T U S.

I hope, my liege, your son has done his duty.  
The gallant soldiers of my little troop  
Shou'd share my laurels as they shar'd my danger.  
I ran no risque but what they bore in common;  
And tho' no herald trumpets forch his praises,  
Tho' no high-sculptur'd marble tells his actions,  
The fearless, unknown, undistinguish'd warrior,  
Who risques his being nobly for his country,  
As much deserves to share the fame of conquest,  
As he who glitters in the front of armies.

C O D R U S.

No plume adorns the soldier's brow like modesty;  
'Tis the best polish of intrinsic merit;  
Of this, my son, I'd have you ever mindful,

For



For whilst the voice of others adds a lustre,  
Self-flatt'ry, rising like a pois'nous fume,  
Cankers the act, and robs it of its brightness.

ADRASTUS.

I hope, my lord——

CODRUS.

Adrastus will excuse me.

An old man's tongue is ever full of sentences.

Thy mother's care has form'd thee to my wishes, would I knew

And, thanks to heav'n, to thee advice is needless.

This morning's service merits much return;

Athens will thank thee, and thy father thanks thee——

Young men have sometimes wishes left ungratified,

Which diffidence forbids their lips to utter.

Say my Adrastus, ask thy own reward.

If 'tis within a monarch's power to grant thee,

The boon, whate'er it is, waits but thy asking.

ADRASTUS.

My liege, your favours have outrun my wishes.

Your guiding hand has led me up from infancy,

And train'd my imperfect steps to perfect manhood.

Thro' ev'ry stage I've known your tenderest goodness.

CODRUS.

Speak out your wants, and if a monarch's power

Can reach the gift, believe your wants are satisfy'd.

ADRASTUS.

Perhaps you'll blame my wish, and call it weakness;

But once your vows were pour'd to Atalanta,

You own'd her charms, and felt the force of love.

CODRUS.

Think not, Adrastus, 'cause this wrinkled brow,

These silv'ry locks denote decaying nature,

I've therefore lost the memory of my manhood.

My youthful blood once knew another tide,

Compar'd to that, which stagnates in my veins,  
 What Atalanta was I well remember,  
 Nor rank myself with those austere philosophers,  
 Who prove, beneath the vizards of morality,  
 Recreants to love, and enemies to nature.  
 If 'tis Jocasta that has fir'd your soul,  
 Believe me, old and tott'ring to the grave,  
 These eyes are no ways strangers to her merits.—  
 I know, my son, the story of your passion;  
 I know she bears, in what concerns your life,  
 A more than usual share of painful sympathy.  
 Long may ye live, long may ye live together,  
 May each endearment Hymen can bestow,  
 Bid ev'ry minute swiftly wing its passage;  
 And, when the fatal moment shall arrive,  
 May you have sons, fraught with their mother's virtues,  
 To mourn your deaths, and make your names eternal.

## A D R A S T U S.

Your approbation doubles all my happiness.  
 Jocasta's charms found here an easy conquest;  
 I knew her virtues, and admir'd her person;  
 And ev'ry youthful, each seducing passion,  
 Conspir'd to forge the bands of amorous slavery.

## C O D R U S.

I do not call thy amorous bondage frailty.—  
 Thy worthy mother oft has spoke her praises.  
 Oft has her lap sustain'd a double burthen,  
 As thou, my son, hast toy'd with thy Jocasta,  
 In years too tender far to think of union.  
 That very moment gave the fair-one birth,  
 Tore her poor mother from the best of husbands.  
 Thy mother, son, hath been a mother to her;  
 Beneath her eye, I've seen the tendril rise,  
 Remark'd the graces ripening to maturity.

Her



Her excellencies have outstrip'd her years,  
 With her 'tis summer, whilst with half her sex,  
 The spring of reason scarce expands its blossoms.

ADRASTUS.

Soon as my homage to the gods is paid,  
 The soldiers sacred vows on brink of battle,  
 Her virgin lips shall learn to call you father.

CODRUS.

Let not your solemn duties be delay'd.—  
 But know, her anxious heart too ill supports  
 A lover's absence. Hasten, hasten to her.  
 Her fortune's link'd in the same chain with thine,  
 And what concerns thee is her bane or happiness.

[Exit.]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT

## A C T III.

## SCENE an Apartment of the Palace.

*The Scene opens and discovers JOCASTA lying on a Couch,  
ADRASTUS, THERSIPPUS, and CEPHISA.*

ADRASTUS.

**A**WAKE, my fair one, 'tis thy soldier calls thee,  
Or if a dearer name can break thy slumbers,  
'Tis thy Adrastus; 'tis Adrastus calls thee,  
Conjures thee wake, by ev'ry tender tie  
Of promis'd love, and fond connubial transport.—  
Alas, 'tis vain! The filmy hand of death  
Hath dull'd the lustre of her eyes for ever.—  
I must not live. The fatal shears are open'd.  
We drank an equal portion of the bev'rage,  
And both must tread the gardens of Elysium,

THERSIPPUS.

What means my lord?

ADRASTUS.

I mean to prove my passion.  
To teach the world, that the rude son of battle,  
Stain'd, as he is, by unrelenting carnage,  
May bear, within his breast an heart as tender,  
As this fair martyr's to the god of friendship.—  
Yes, my Jocasta, if our kindred shades  
Shall of this upper world retain a memory,  
Amidst those bowers, and by those purling rills,  
Which sound so sweetly in the poets songs,  
We yet may meet in softest social converse.—  
One parting kiss, the modesty of love,  
Pure as the crystal stream, will not forbid me.—

Methinks



Methinks she breathes. Oh all ye powers assist her.  
 Or was it fancy?—yet her palled lips  
 Trembled, methought, as they were clos'd to mine.—  
 Is there a being watches over love?  
 Almighty God. let thy all-quick'ning grace  
 Recall her life; and give me back to happiness.  
 She sighs.—Ye gods, a sigh from my Jocasta  
 Wou'd once, like gall, have poison'd all my bliss;  
 Yet now 'tis musick, sweeter to my ears  
 Than the soft lyre's most artificial melody.  
 She sighs again.—Befriend her ev'ry power,  
 Restore me, heav'ns, my lost, my lov'd Jocasta.

CEPHISA.

She breathes, my lord, resume your warmest wishes.  
 Her curdled blood again melts into life,  
 And her fond tongue shall learn to call you husband.

JOCASTA.

Wretch that I am—methought I heard a voice—  
 A once-known voice, call out for her he lov'd.—  
 'Twill not be long, e'er I again shall see thee.

ADRASTUS.

Ye guardian powers, protectors of our beings,  
 Accept my thanks, the scanty boon of gratitude.

JOCASTA.

'Tis all illusion—Shield me gracious heav'n—  
 'Tis but the phantom of ideal fancy,  
 Painted by sickness, on a mind distemper'd.—  
 Shew me thy wounds, and let my dying lips  
 Kiss off the gore that stains thy manly limbs.  
 Let me behold him.—I'm prepar'd to follow.

ADRASTUS.

What means my life!—What means the fair Jocasta?  
 'Tis I myself. 'Tis no ideal form,

F

But

But he, who oft has on Illysus' bank  
Sigh'd to the stream his pure unsullied passion.

J O C A S T A.

Oh, 'tis impossible! These very eyes,  
Now made the sport of unsubstantial vision,  
Beheld thee, saw thee, prostrate on the plain.—  
Leave me awhile. E'er long the marble tomb  
May join, as once our souls were join'd, our ashes.  
Hadst thou but liv'd, I had indeed been happy;  
But now the fates have almost spun my thread.  
I cannot, must not, will not, long survive thee.

A D R A S T U S.

Sure all thy senses cannot be delusive.  
Thus let me live upon this ivory hand,  
Thus press it trembling to that anxious bosom,  
Whose beating heart throbs but for my Jocasta.

J O C A S T A.

Do'st thou then live!—He lives almighty heav'n!  
Or do-I dream! Ye gods, 'tis my Adrastus!  
But say—tell on—oh tell the wond'rous tale!  
What chance, what miracle, has thus preserv'd thee?  
Oh, 'tis too much—My joy o'erwhelms my reason.  
He lives, ye gods, he lives—This flood of transport  
Stagnates the vital current of existence.

A dull-lethargic numbness chills my veins.  
I can no more—support me—oh Adrastus— [She faints.]

A D R A S T U S.

Help, help, Cephisa—Aid her gracious heav'n.

T H E R S I P P U S.

Thus, thus Adrastus, all extremes are baneful.  
Nature has bounds, and if we pass its limits,  
Excess of good destroys like that of evil.

A D R A S T U S.



ADRASTUS.

Methinks that glow which once out-blush'd the rose,  
Faintly returns. Yet, like the morning's sun,  
Rising o'er misty hills, how pale, how wan her visage!  
Raise her, Cephisa; gently raise her head,  
And let me gaze on those remains of beauty.—  
'Tis done, 'tis done.—The world has now no claim,  
No right, to call on what was once Adrastus.  
The brave man knows how to relieve his sorrows.

THERSIPPUS.

Give, give her air.

ADRASTUS.

Methought that snowy breast  
Seem'd just to heave. Or do my flatter'ing hopes  
Make pastime of my senses?—Sure she lives—  
The ruby's faintest tinge just paints her lips.  
Look up, my fair, and bless thy lov'd Adrastus.

JOCASTA.

Something, like musick, seem'd to pierce my soul;  
'Twas the enchanting voice of him I lov'd.—  
My dearest lord, excuse a woman's frailty,  
But the wild torrent of tumultuous joy,  
So unexpected too, o'erwhelm'd my frame.—  
I'm yet confus'd—give me a moment's time.—  
Perhaps my reason may resume its throne,  
And lead me thro' the chaos that surrounds me.—  
'Tis he, 'tis he! Believe me, my Adrastus,  
Methought I saw you one short second since,  
Heard the first openings of a wond'rous tale,  
Shar'd one embrace, and in a moment lost you.

ADRASTUS.

[He kneels.]

Ye over-ruling powers, thus let me thank you.  
Jocasta lives, she lives, and I am happy.

JOCASTA.

Yet all around me seems Elysian ground,  
 I only wander thro' some myrtle grove,  
 Or tread the banks of some delightful riv'let,  
 Where faithful lovers meet to live for ever.  
 Along this vale, Adrastus, let us wander;  
 Hark, how the feather'd songsters swell their notes,  
 That pansied mead shall listen to our theme,  
 Nor shall the Spartan interrupt us more.

Yes, 'tis my lord. Methinks the mist dispels,  
 As summer-fogs disperse themselves in air  
 When the great sov'reign of the day arises,  
 Yes, 'tis my lord. Oh let me hear thy tale,  
 What pitying god has to my arms restor'd thee!  
 Each word thou speak'st brings with it greater bliss,  
 Than the scorch'd Libyan ever yet receiv'd,  
 Midst glowing sands, from unexpected fountains.  
 Speak, speak my lord; thus list'ning let me kneel  
 Rooted to earth, whilst still attention hangs  
 On ev'ry accent which those lips shall utter.

THERSIPPUS.

Let needful rest refresh thy wand'ring spirits.  
 'Tis now enough, Jocasta, that he lives,  
 And lives to grace thee with the crown of Athens.

JOCASTA.

Canst thou then thus,—thus in an instant leave me?

ADRASTUS.

But as the miser quits his heav'n, his treasure,  
 Again with countless int'rest to receive it:  
 A moment's absence in a lover's eye  
 Swells into years. But when thy health demands it,  
 Thus, thus, Jocasta, can I tear me from thee.

[Adrastus and Thersippus advance to the front of  
 the stage. The scene closes.]

ADRASTUS,



ADRASTUS.

Father, (allow me now the tenderest name  
That friendship dictates) long the king has lov'd you,  
And all his subjects, not one voice dissenting,  
Have join'd their plaudits to his royal praises.  
Permit me to request the greatest boon  
Fancy can form. The king approves my choice;  
But ev'ry parent has parental rights,  
And there are still the bonds of filial duty.  
Thus let me bend, thus ask Jocasta from you.

THERSIPPUS.

To see you kneel young warrior wou'd be treason.—  
Your peerless services demand her from me.

[Embracing him.]

May she deserve you, may she long deserve you.  
I've done my little utmost, and my care,  
My prating gossips tell me, is rewarded.  
I know no blemish, prince, that yet deforms her,  
Love's not a blemish—I approve her fondness.

ADRASTUS.

Alas, my father, my too slender merits  
Are but as foils to raise her virtues higher.  
The livid eye of envy may peruse her:  
Thro' all her form, there's not a single point  
The sculptor's chisel cou'd have rais'd more highly.  
But when her friends, in echo to each other,  
Exulting speak her numberless perfections,  
Detraction sickens, and the eye of slander  
Shrinks inward, dazzled by too strong a splendour.  
Compar'd with hers, my merits sink in shade,  
Conceal'd, as is the moon before the sun.  
I wou'd deserve her; but, my dear Thersippus,  
Her many charms eclipse my feeble virtues.

THE

## C O D R U S :

THERSIPPUS.

Too generous youth, thou nobly hast deserv'd her.—

But, hark——

[Trumpets,

*Enter the KING and ATALANTA.*

C O D R U S.

The queen, Adrastus, shares the general joy,  
She comes to give thee all a mother's blessings.

A T A L A N T A.

[Embracing him.]

Still may'st thou run the course thy father points thee,

Still may'st thou prove the rival of his actions.—

I've heard too all thy title to Jocasta.—

My joy's too great, a treasure much too mighty.

How is the bride? Thersippus, how's my nurseling?

THERSIPPUS.

A few hours sleep will recompose her spirits,

And now the god has drop'd his poppies o'er her,

A T A L A N T A.

Thus nature wantons as she runs her course;

Death is the Woodman, and his cruel stroke

Levels the oak and wedded vine together.

From the same trunk a future oak arises,

From the same root, the vine extends its tendrils,

And future nuptials make the forest happy.

When we are gone, Thersippus, may they live,

Whilst we live on another age in them.

Their children too, may they survive their parents,

And thus shall we survive a long futurity.

*Enter MEDON.*

M E D O N.

May all your joys be lasting as they're general,

Around the forum knotted stand together,

Group after group, the citizens of Athens;

Each



Each tells his neighbour something yet unheard ;  
 And if a soldier enters from the camp,  
 They almost suffocate him for intelligence.  
 Question on question scarce admits reply ;  
 How was it ? when ? and where ? and how again ?  
 Each circumstance attractive of additions  
 To be the wonder of the ev'ning's conference.  
 The hollow-cheek'd musician, scowl'd from home,  
 High on his toes is now a match for Sparta.  
 Think, think, Adrastus, what a wrong you've done me.—

ADRASTUS.

I wrong you, brother, sure I never meant it.

MEDON.

You've wrong'd me, brother, and most nobly done it.—  
 When this good sword was given me by my father,  
 I thought I had a right to gather laurels,  
 A soldier's right ; and now the people tell me,  
 The round-fac'd crouds, that all the harvest's gather'd.—  
 They cou'd not mean affront, but as I pass'd  
 They tofs'd their caps, and hallow'd out, Adrastus.—  
 I'll seek revenge,—ev'n in their camp I'll do it.—  
 I'll somewhere get a sprig to shade my forehead,  
 Or I'll not leave your footsteps 'till I find one.

ATALANTA.

You're sure not jealous of your brother's virtues ;  
 He claims a prior right, was born before you,  
 Cou'd lisp out words e'er you were in your cradle,  
 He rode triumphant e'er your nurse was sent for.

MEDON.

Believe me, mother, I'm most strangely envious ;  
 But, for the future,—I will track his steps,  
 They'll lead me right ; and as he springs to glory,  
 I'll make a wond'rous bound to be before him.

CODRUS.

**C O E D R U S.**  
 Therfippus, fee that ev'ry thing's prepar'd;  
 The minfrels, garlands, and th' appointed victims.  
 Bid ev'ry priest, in his beft gayeft garb,  
 Attend to-morrow, e'er to-morrow's fun  
 Gives new refulgence to our polifh'd armour.  
 Forgive me, foldier, if a father's hafte  
 Shou'd take the lead, and fpur before your wifhes.

**A D R A S T U S.**  
 Such goodnefs makes a fon's petitions needlefs.  
 To-morrow let me thank you at the altar,  
 And may my future duties pay your kindnefs.

[A trumpet heard.]

**C O E D R U S.**  
 That trumpet shou'd denote the Angur's meeting;  
 Without the gods our beft attempts are nothing.  
 Follow the queen, Therfippus; Atalanta  
 Waits but a proper hour to fee your daughter.

[Exeunt the King, Atalanta, and Therfippus.]

**M E D O N.**  
 I've bit my nails this full half-hour on't, brother;  
 This wedding carries fomething in its front  
 As if 'twou'd be a very lofing bargain.

**A D R A S T U S.**  
 You love to joke, and e'en keep on your way,  
 A winning gamefter never frets at raillery.—  
 But tell me, brother, shou'd I traverse Greece,  
 Where is the virgin half fo rare as fhe!  
 So pure, fo fpotlefs! fuch complete perfection.—  
 I've dreamt of deities but never faw them;  
 Sure fhe's the model of celeftial beauty!

**M E D O N.**  
 You know full well my prying difpofition;  
 I'm fometimes blam'd for't, but it's no great matter.

Just



Just at the corner, by the city-gate,  
 Where purblind Labrax, rich in learned lumber,  
 Shews you the rudder us'd by old Ogyges,  
 I saw two aged matrons meet together.  
 Their furrow'd vizards were of faded yellow,  
 Edg'd round with here and there an hair of grizzle.  
 Clear drops of pearl hung from their peeked noses.  
 Quick paralytick touches shook their heads,  
 And as their skinny hands were clasp'd together,  
 Which seem'd emboss'd with veins and starting sinews,  
 They mutter'd magick in close busy conference.  
 I listen'd, brother, and I found them read  
 In all the mysteries of Lucina's learning.  
 Your hopeful marriage was the ballad's burthen,  
 Which one and t'other snuffed out by turns.  
 The elder of them, if there was an elder,  
 God knows when born—when old Eretheus reign'd—  
 Thought the young princess, so they pleas'd to call her,  
 Was scarce mature enough for wedding's burden.—  
 I almost blush'd—but they were knowing, brother.

ADRASTUS.

Fie, brother, fie! these are too gross conceptions—  
 But brave it nobly, there's a day will come,  
 When some fair Grecian shall throw out a lure  
 To bring you down, and you'll obey the signal.

MEDON.

So quit the world for one poor paddock, brother.—  
 I was in luck, you came some years before me,  
 Else I had drudg'd, a work of mere necessity,  
 To please a wife, and give to Athens princes.  
 Perhaps I'm rude, and yet I've no such meaning;  
 I like your choice, were I to put on fetters,  
 Such a seducing hand shou'd make them easy.—  
 But I shall laugh to see the formal greeting,

G

When

When you, to please a girl, give up your liberty.—  
 For what were half our boasted laws enacted?—  
 The satchel'd school-boy answers to the question,  
 And cries, unprompted, 'To preserve our liberty.'  
 Why is't we fight? why glare we thus in armour?  
 'Tis for this single point, to guard our liberty,  
 Else had this sword been cank'ring in the ar's'nal,  
 And unmolested moths on this had feasted.

[Pointing to his plume.]

Yet man, possess'd of reason, gives it up  
 For a poor toy, a single hour of dalliance.

ADRASTUS.

In fancy, Medon, we pursue one object;  
 You clasp a phantom, I substantial happiness;  
 The steady pole-star regulates my conduct,  
 Whilst you, the trav'ler on the marl's margin,  
 Are made the dupe of putrid exhalations.

Enter CEPHISA.

CEPHISA to ADRASTUS.

The queen, Sir, waits you. [Exit Adrastus.]

MEDON, *seizing her hand as she is going.*

Gently, dear Cephisa—

Nay, do not fly; for by those eyes I swear,  
 That breast, those lips were form'd for fascination.—

—I love you much, but can't resign my liberty.

CEPHISA.

Consider, Sir—

MEDON.

I have already done it.

And thus I came to form my resolutions.—

To-day's serene. What will it be to-morrow?

To-morrow's now at no such mighty distance,

And yet, perhaps, the soldiers in the trenches

May



A TRAGEDY.

43

May twist the rain out of their locks to-morrow:—  
A wanton boy, I whipp'd my top, Cephisa,  
Enjoy'd myself in the transporting pleasure,  
And wish'd such whipping might but last for ever.—  
Yet where's my top?—gone with my other baubles.—  
Then think, Cephisa, on that fool my brother,

CEPHISA.

To-morrow, Sir, will make your brother happy,

MEDON.

It might do me; but then to-morrow's morrow—  
I'll swear to love, but dare not swear to constancy.  
By these dear lips—

CEPHISA.

Latona's daughter aid me—

MEDON.

Nay, you shall listen. I'm in earnest, fair one.  
I love you much, but love not nuptial drudgery.  
When the swift stag has strain'd it o'er the plain,  
Still I've been foremost to partake the pleasure.  
But think, Cephisa, had the toil been duty,  
How had I flag'd?—The hir'd retainer shews it  
Who wears a badge, and sports upon compulsion.  
We'll love, my fair; and, shining o'er the tester,  
We'll write these glorious letters, Love and Liberty.

CEPHISA.

I am not yet so low reduc'd by fortune  
To be a list'ner to such lawless language.—  
Let go my hand; the camp, Sir, may suffice you.

[Exit Cephisa.]

MEDON.

So, there she goes to bark away at court,  
And hoard me up a lecture from my father.—  
What shall I say?—why plead the law of nature;  
Ask where was marriage ere king Cecrops reign'd?

G 2

Or,

Or, rather, in a most submissive tone,  
Twirl round my thumbs, and snuffle out, 'Excuse me.' A

*Enter THERSILOCHUS.*

THERSILOCHUS.

Believe me, prince, the gods declare against us.

MEDON.

I'm sorry for't. When, where, and how, Therfilochus?

THERSILOCHUS.

Last night an half-starv'd wolf prowl'd thro' the city,  
To-day an eagle, hov'ring o'er the camp,  
Bore off a pigeon in its merciless pounces.

MEDON.

When I was born my father's kitten mew'd,  
'Tis said my mother suffer'd violent pains,  
And that the midwife ere my birth was sent for.  
These things were natural, and I'm still existing.

Fie, fie, Therfilochus, a soldier's spirits  
Shou'd not thus hang upon a cloud's formation.  
Come hither, friend. Let me observe thy sword,  
Make a good use on't, and ne'er mind the eagles.

THERSILOCHUS.

They tell me too, the king your father's image  
Fell from its base, and as the crowd drew round,  
A filv'ry meteor play'd about its temples.

MEDON.

Thou know'st Lyfander, he has got a chisel,  
That in conjunction with a wooden mallet  
Will form another.

THERSILOCHUS.

They inform me further,

The soldiers on the ramparts hear strange noises,  
An headless ghost, just as the moon arose,  
Was seen this evening by a straggling soldier.

He



# A TRAGEDY.

45

He wou'd have drawn his sword, but says his hair  
Grew rigid as he gaz'd, and that he durst not.

MEDON.

Has Athens, think'st thou, bred so mean a dastard?  
Go—go, thou tir'st me with thy idle whimsies.

[Exit Therfilochus.]

There goes a man, that ere the setting sun,  
Wou'd dive into the red volcano's entrails;  
But give him twilight, or the lunar ray,  
Each stubbed trunk's prolifick with chimeras.  
He hesitates, and listens to his tread,  
And horror breathes in ev'ry wind that whistles.—  
This was the labour of his suff'ring infancy,  
The nurse's impress, who by foolish tales  
Crouded his brain with unexistent beings.  
The paste the midwife moulds retains its form,  
And old wives stories to the grave pursue us.

[Exit.]

SCENE the Spartan Camp.

The KING of Sparta and CALCHAS.

KING.

There, where the rifted oak spreads its brown shade,  
Beside the riv'let, plant the royal standard.—  
Ere that wan moon shall change again its visage,  
Yon dusky battlements, fring'd round with spears,  
Shall moulder to the soil whence they ascended.—  
They talk of law, and princes now-a-days,  
Like petty peasants, tread within the circles  
Which priests and puling wizards draw around them.—  
I'm weary on't—I know myself superiour  
To the mean herd that bleats but for my pleasures.—  
And was I born, superior to my fellows,  
To have my arms bound down by ties of cobwebs,  
Dozing a life of poor inactive indolence.—

Yes,

Yes, let the grey hair'd Augur whisper virtue;  
 This whiten'd plain, whose hum salutes the canopy  
 Of list'ning heav'n, speaks out the rights of royalty,  
 The lion's right, of victory and slaughter.—  
 Adieu then conscience, and ambition welcome;  
 Sound thou the clarion, and this host shall follow.—  
 —Calchas, to-morrow call me ere the sun,  
 Yon smoaking huts that sparkle round the country  
 Shall be the lights to guide me to my humbers.

*[Retires into his tent.]*

Wou'd I cou'd sleep; but 'tis in vain I wish it,  
 For ever as I close my eyes I start,  
 Pursu'd by hissing fiends, and grizzly spectres.—  
 Calchas, good night. I wou'd be wak'd to-morrow  
 An hour ere twilight.—Ho, return, my Calchas,  
 Tell yon impertinent, the busy Augur,  
 He may a day or two suspend his labours.  
 I like him not; for what have I to do  
 With bugbear stories of an ox's entrails.  
 The birds may fly just as they please, my Calchas.  
 I'll have no tales to buz around my tents,  
 Like those of yesterday, to fright my soldiers.  
 —Once more, good night—but let me think a moment.—  
 These old wives prophecies delude the bands;  
 Set me a guard upon the Augur's tent,  
 I'll have no messages from heav'n to-morrow.

*[Lies down to sleep.]*

What is there, gods, that shou'd disturb me thus!  
 The shepherd, outed from his humble cottage,  
 Will sleep uncover'd on the mountain's furze,  
 And soundly sleep, whilst I wear out the night,  
 Where beds of down wou'd court me to repose,  
 In wakeful ruminations on my pillow.

*[Arises from his couch.]*

I'll



# A T R A G E D Y.

42

I'll walk, and try what the cool breeze will do,  
For 'tis in vain these eyelids close together.

[*A spectre crosses the stage.*]  
Ha! what art thou that thus affront'st my view!  
Say whence thou art, and tell me what thy message?  
—Thou saw'st it, Calchas, and again 'tis nothing.

CALCHAS.

Saw what, my liege? save here and there a centinel,  
The camp's as still as this late hour can make it.

KING.

It was not fancy, I beheld it plainly;  
It stalk'd across this path, and then it vanish'd.

CALCHAS.

Perhaps, my liege, 'twas some nocturnal meteor;  
Such as the cheated trav'ler oft pursues  
Thro' swamps and quagmires, where at last it leaves him.

KING.

No, Calchas, no. These very eyes beheld it:  
I'm all amazement; it held on its way  
With step more solemn than we mortals use,  
Thrice shook its head, and then my friend it vanish'd.

CALCHAS.

You are not well; believe me 'twas a dream.  
Retire, my lord; your slumbers will compose you.

KING.

No, never, Calchas.

SPECTRE re-enters.

See; 'tis there again!

Befriend me heav'n, and all ye powers support me.  
Say what thou art, and why thou thus presumest,  
At this late hour, to break upon my privacy?

SPECTRE.

Thy evil genius. I have led thee hither.  
By soothing tales and flatteries have inspir'd

Thy

Thy ulcerated breast with foul ambition.  
 Have stir'd thee up to meditate thy lusts;  
 Have prompted thee to stain thy hands in innocence;  
 To wrong the widow, and abuse the orphan;  
 And made thee promises shall ne'er be perfected.—  
 To-morrow, tyrant, I'll once more attend thee.

*[Disappears.]*

KING.

'Tis gone again.—I know thee deeply read  
 In secret mysteries. If thy lore extends,  
 (As others tell me) to the realms below,  
 Explain the meaning of this strange appearance.

CALCHAS.

I saw it not. 'Tis but, my liege, indeed  
 Some spectre form'd by fumes of indigestion,  
 As is the night-mare—had the thing been real  
 These eyes of mine most surely must have seen it.

KING.

To-morrow, tyrant, I'll again attend thee.—  
 Why let it come—I'm not afraid of man,  
 Nor will I dread an incorporeal being.—  
 To-morrow, tyrant, I'll again attend thee.—  
 I'll try to sleep.—This night, my friend, wake with me,  
 And see the lamp be burning on my table.

*[The scene closes.]*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT



A TRAGEDY.

49

ACT IV.

SCENE, the Temple.

PRIESTS and AUGURS in their habits.

ADRASTUS and JOCASTA at the altar.

CODRUS, MEDON, THERSIPEUS, ATALANTA,  
CEPHISA, and Attendants.

THE NUPTIAL HYMN.

DISTANT from courts, beside the rill,  
Whose limpid waters flow  
With ceaseless tinklings down the hill,  
Where plaintive doves the brown oaks fill,  
And heifers browse below,  
The sun-burnt swain his carol chaunts along,  
And Delia blushing listens to his song.  
No tinsel'd Tunick decks the youth,  
His pride is innocence and truth;  
Her heart consents, and Damon loves,  
And ev'ry smiling god approves.  
There Cupid joys to see the arrow sped,  
And Hymen strews with flow'rs the shepherd's nuptial bed.

CHORUS.

From jacin'd bowers, ye gods, your courts remove,  
Adrastus weds.—Be this the seat of love.—

Hence, ye prophane. No more the pontiff stands  
To pair discordant hearts, and join reluctant hands.

CHORUS.

From tinkling rills, ye gods, your courts remove,  
Cupid descends.—Be this the seat of love.—

H

Come,

Come, Hymen, come with all thy train,  
 The sightless god begins his reign;  
 The jocund tenants of the dale  
 To rural reeds shall tell the tale;  
 And shepherds imitate his loves,  
 Whom ev'ry smiling god approves.  
 Sound, sound the trumpet, strike the lyre,  
 And echo all you white-rob'd choir,

Hark, the glad news!—The gods their seats remove,  
 Adrastus weds, and here's the court of love.

*The HIGH PRIEST joining their hands.*

Ye holy patrons of the rights of marriage,  
 Accept this fairest, most unblemish'd sacrifice,  
 Long may the torch of Hymeneal concord  
 Glow pure and unpoluted. Long may fortune,  
 From more than liberal horn, show'r down her blessings,  
 And when th' inevitable moment comes  
 To part these hands, thus happily united,  
 May sonorous fame choose out her sweetest clarion,  
 To spread the blissful tenour of their lives,  
 And give to future times a fair example.

CODRUS.

Be this a day of more than common joy;  
 Let the glad news be echo'd thro' the camp,  
 And let the soldier share his sov'reign's transports.—  
 —My blushing fair, I much approve your union;  
 But these tempestuous times too ill agree  
 With sportive loves, and long-continu'd dalliance.  
 Shou'd the rude trumpet tear him from your arms,  
 Heave not a sigh that may unman your husband;  
 Forget yourself, and bid him save his country.

[*Exeunt Adrastus, Jocasta, Atalanta, Cephalus, Priests*  
*and Attendants.*]

CODRUS



# A TRAGEDY

513

CODRUS and THERSIPPUS advance to the front of the stage. *The scene is set.*

CODRUS.

Perhaps old age may be too superstitious.

Thou saw'st that statue, and th' astonish'd Augurs,

With wild amazement, gazing on each other.

THERSIPPUS.

I saw it, and remark'd the lambent flame

Which play'd about its temples.

CODRUS.

To the gods

All things are seen. We wander in the dark,

And boasted reason's furthest piercing eye

Is lost in fogs, thro' which it cannot penetrate.

We talk of knowledge; yet to-morrow's dawn

May be productive of ten thousand monsters

We never dreamt of. Yesterday Troy stood

Proud in the safeguard of her peerless battlements;

Her sons were gay, her virgins crown'd with flowers;

To-day th' insidious horse is usher'd in

To choral musick. This, my friend, is foresight;

The utmost reach of human penetration.

*Enter an OFFICER.*

OFFICER.

From Delphos, Sir, your envoy waits admittance.

He seems much alter'd; as he spoke, a tear

Stood on his cheek; and from his soul a groan,

Spite of his struggles, forc'd itself a passage.

CODRUS.

I'm ready, tell him, to receive his mandate.

[Exit Officer.]

Now all is well; the gods are our directors.

Mortality is blind; but their decrees,

Howe'er inscrutable to weak humanity,  
Stand on the basis of eternal rectitude.

*Enter PTERILAS, who gazes upon the king in a dejected attitude.*

Say, why this silence? why that downcast eye?—  
'Tis not for man to cross the ways of providence,  
Murm'ring he knows not why. 'Tis his to bear  
Jove's hottest bolts with chearful resignation.

PTERILAS.

Thou best of monarchs, ever-honour'd sovereign,  
Excuse my tears.—

CODRUS.

What means this strange emotion?—

Within this breast there's but a single point  
Wherein affliction's angriest tooth can rankle.—  
Is Athens destin'd to receive a conqueror?—

PTERILAS.

Alas, my lord, one remedy is left her.

CODRUS.

Is Athens safe!—Ye gods, your light'nings pour,  
This aged head shall welcome down the tempest.—  
My country safe!—Almighty powers I thank you.—  
What can there then remain that thus unmans thee!

PTERILAS.

Alas, my prince, permit my tears to flow,  
My honest tears, pour'd forth for you and Athens.

CODRUS.

One moment pause, and recollect thy spirits.  
Are we so sunk, as in the rolls of fame  
Not to find equals in the depths of misery?—  
—Still art thou silent?—wherefore did I send thee?

PTERILAS.

Forgive my tongue its most ungrateful office.—  
Each hallow'd rite religiously perform'd,

The



The pythian maid her ivory throne ascended,  
 She shook the laurel, and devour'd its verdure,  
 A wild distortion ran thro' all her limbs,  
 And strange convulsive motions tore her frame;  
 Her eyes were haggard, and her hair erect  
 Stood like the darts of the enraged porcupine,  
 'Till, faint, she fell. Then, starting from her trance,  
 In interrupted accents thus she spoke:

'To Codrus bear this mandate from Apollo——

'Bid him devote himself to save his country.'

CODRUS.

To Attica all hail! All hail my country.——

—What is the life of man, that thus ye stand,

That thus with idle tears ye mourn its exit.

'Twas heav'n, my friends, assign'd to me a diadem;

Heav'n now demands it back, and I resign it.

Here, as a sentinel, I've kept my post

Not unesteem'd, and now the gods relieve me.

THERSIPPUS.

Oh Athens! oh my sov'reign! oh my country!

CODRUS.

Hence 'twas the Spartan fenc'd about my life

By strict injunction. Here th' enigma's ended.

To Pterilas.] Be this a secret seal'd within thy bosom;

Let no pretence of friendship force it from thee—

Leave us awhile.—

[Exit Pterilas.]

My good Thersippus,

In all engagements I have found thee faithful;

My greatest trust is now repos'd upon thee.

Adrastus yet, my friend, in manhood's morning,

Will need the guidance of thy better counsels.

Desert him not; but if he ever deviate

From the fair paths trod by his great forefathers,

Tell him he errs neglectful of his honour.

THER-

THERSIPPUS.

Alas, my prince, I see full well your purpose!  
 Why need we rush on such too dire resources?  
 What vulgar means of safety are deny'd us?  
 The city stands, her bulwarks yet unshaken.  
 Her valiant sons are basking in the field,  
 And seem to chide the intervals of victory.

CODRUS.

Peace, peace, Thersippus.—I revere the gods,  
 Have heard their signal, and must now obey it.—  
 How came I here?—From whence was my existence?  
 'Twas but a loan intrusted me by providence;  
 And shall the debtor, when the hour is come  
 Of just demand, refuse to make his payment?  
 Shall I, who 'midst the bustle of a world,  
 By vice polluted, have maintain'd my virtue,  
 Now, when the frost of age is chill upon me,  
 Turn recreant to the gods, and blast my glory?  
 Lament me not. The just expiring taper,  
 Quiv'ring for life, now sinks within its socket.  
 A little pause, and in the course of nature  
 I shou'd be what to-morrow's sun will see me.  
 Thousands of thousands, o'er whose mould ring carcases  
 The lowing cattle crop the plenteous herbage,  
 Have meanly struggled for a short reprieve.—  
 Where are they now?—Extend my scanty span,  
 Spin out this cobweb to its utmost limits,  
 I must be dust when this poor dream is over.—  
 One only cloud, Thersippus, dulls my spirits.—  
 My Atalanta, and my infant Theseus.—  
 Here I cou'd weep.—Forgive me all my fondness.  
 If 'tis a crime the gods will sure forgive it.—  
 Yes, we must part, must rend those bands asunder  
 Which love and reason have so long cemented.—

Forgive



Forgive my weakness ! Thou, my friend, wilt be  
To her a husband, and to him a father.

THESSIPPUS.

What great, what glorious, what transcendent goodness !

CORPUS.

We're here but mariners, and this our voyage  
Is interrupted oft by rocks and shoals,  
Which call aloud for all the steerman's diligence.—  
Be thou the pilot of my widow'd family.—  
My little son will sometime hear my story  
Told as of one whom Athens once lamented.  
Form thou his mind not to disgrace his country,  
Instruct him to despise this airy bubble  
When honour calls, and the bleak field demands him.—  
His mother has a soul beyond her sex ;  
She'll be thy best assistant in thy labours ;  
But yet remember, she's a mother still,  
A tender mother, and a mother's eyes  
Are but too often clos'd to youthful follies.  
Be thou the index of her erring reason,  
If overcome by nature's tenderest bondage  
She pay her tribute to too blind affection.—  
Thou know'st full well a father's partial feelings,  
And this last pledge, just as the farce was ending,  
In the brown autumn of decay'd existence  
Came welcome, doubly welcome, to my arms.—  
My soul be calm.—Excuse a moment's pause.—  
Paternal tenderness bears full upon me.

[He looks steadfastly at Thessippus, who continues  
weeping with his eyes fixed upon the ground.]

But now 'tis over, and I am calm again.—  
Why stand'st thou thus ? Thou lovest but a friend,  
And I shall part with all the croud around me.—

The

The moulder'd prop, Therfippus, will be wanting,  
Raife thou the plant, and tend it to maturity.

**THERSIPPUS.**

One scarce-felt pang wou'd make me thy companion,  
Nor shou'd I figh amidst my bleeding country.

**CODRUS.**

Life is, my trustiest friend, become thy duty.  
Thy dying sov'reign gives it thee in charge  
To be the guardian of his orphan family.

**THERSIPPUS.**

O'erwhelm'd by sorrow, and oppress'd by age,  
'Tis with reluctance I support my burthen.—  
But when the soldier has his name enroll'd,  
He must maintain, at all events, his station.

**CODRUS.**

My truant son, led by his untam'd passions,  
Like the young stallion, oft o'ertops the bounds  
Prescrib'd by reason. Let him feel the rein;  
His soul is gen'rous, and he'll hear thy precepts.—  
Thou know'st the brood that ever haunt a palace  
Instilling flatt'ries, pleasing to the ear,  
As deadliest poison honey'd to the palate.  
Preserve him from their pestilential breathings.—  
Ambition is a weed produc'd by virtue,  
But such a weed as, if not timely guarded,  
Destroys each wholesome plant that's rooted near it.  
Instruct him that his lesson is obedience;  
That usurpation, tho' success shou'd crown it,  
Meets full damnation from the trump of fame,  
Blasting that memory which it seems to foster.—  
As yet his brother is his other self;  
But who can tell what sycophants may prompt  
By dulcet words, in some unguarded moment

**THER-**



# A TRAGEDY.

57

THERSIPPUS.

With strictest eye I've watch'd the prince's conduct:  
His mind's a garden, and the too rich soil  
Throws out unwelcome thistles. These, my liege,  
A little time, a little care, will conquer.

CODRUS.

That care be thine. Do thou attend him duly.—  
But yet, Thersippus, there's a greater charge;  
Where ev'ry tie concurs with thy allegiance,  
Thy future monarch calls aloud upon thee:  
Instruct him often, that he wears his crown  
But as the guardian of his people's freedom.  
That he's a man, as others, born to pain.  
Teach him to feel when'er his country suffers,  
To stretch his hand wherever misery calls,  
And not to think he stoops beneath the throne  
By list'ning to the tender voice of pity.—  
One last embrace is due to Atalanta.—  
My friend, assist me in that trying moment.—  
Go, and prepare her. Point her out the storm  
Whilst yet 'tis coming. Bid her fly for shelter  
To all her prudence, all her recollection;  
To her dependance on the powers above us.—  
I dare to die; but oh, my best Thersippus,  
I tremble when I think on such a parting;  
Yet part we must, and thou can'st best support her.

THERSIPPUS.

Are you then fix'd, my liege? resolv'd to see her?  
Were it not better to let fame divulge,  
By scanty piecemeals, what has happen'd to you?

CODRUS.

Thro' life, Thersippus, we have liv'd together  
In concord ceaseless. Not a single spot  
Has soil'd our union; and our last farewell

I

Shall

Shall be the witness of abiding friendship.  
 I've found her more than man expects in woman;  
 In ev'ry toil still to her load superiour;  
 In ev'ry labour of the state a sharer.  
 Tell her 'tis—duty rends her husband from her,  
 And bid her rest on an o'er-ruling providence.

*Enter PTERILAS.*

PTERILAS.

Alas, alas, more troubles croud upon us.  
 The prince, my liege, is gently borne along  
 By weeping soldiers, whilst the fest'ring dart  
 Preys on his life implanted in his bosom.  
 'Tis by his orders they convey him hither;  
 You gave him life, and here he now resigns it.

CODRUS.

The gods, Thersippus, chide me for delay.  
 Thus, thus they scourge me for a moment's dalliance.

*Enter ADRASTUS borne by soldiers, THERSILOCHUS  
 and Attendants*

ADRASTUS.

I thank you, soldiers.—'Tis your gen'ral thanks you.—  
 Here set me down,—and let me breathe my last  
 In his lov'd sight who gave me my existence.—  
 I've done my utmost, and my race is over.—  
*To Codrus.* Receive my shield.—Those gracious hands  
 Accept the last of duties death permits me. [*bestow'd it.*  
*To Thersippus.* My poor Jocasta was this morning yours.  
 She's mine no longer.—I must now resign her.—  
 A misty something floats before my senses—  
 Protect her heav'n; and oh—protect my country.

[*Dies.*

CODRUS.



# A TRAGEDY.

59

CODRUS.

There went his soul—but let me not repine,  
His death is early, but is not ignoble.—  
The womb of fate is seal'd; and who can tell  
What evils wait him who to-day is happy?—  
Inform me, soldier, didst thou see him fall?  
Recount me all thou know'st of his disaster.

THERSILOCHUS.

From the thick wood, which skirts us on the left,  
A Spartan cohort rush'd into our trenches  
Just as the priest his hallow'd rites had ended.  
The charge was sounded, and Adrastus heard it.  
I saw him as he parted from Jocasta.  
He stole a kiss; and smiling on her cry'd,  
'Th' alarm's unwelcome, but when Athens calls  
'I must not teach my princess to despise me.'—  
Where'er he wheel'd he made the battle ours;  
'Till, as he prest too close upon his foe,  
He fell, surrounded by his conqu'ring soldiers.  
His reason told him ev'ry aid was useless.  
He call'd to Medon, clasp'd him to his bosom,  
And bid him hasten to compleat his vict'ry.  
Then, turning to his men, who gaz'd upon him,  
Address them thus: 'Be constant in your duty,  
'Your king, your country will reward your service.  
'Who wou'd not wish to die to serve his country?'  
He fainted now. We rais'd him from the ground,  
And as his life return'd, he calmly ask'd us  
To take his shield, and bear him to his father.

CODRUS.

Farewell, Adrastus.—He, my friends, lives long  
Who lives a life of never-ceasing virtue.  
The scented youth, who at the harlot's toilet,  
Sings am'rous catches to amuse his mistress,

May view this corpse, and blush for all his follies.  
 This pallid cheek is in the bloom of glory,  
 And these red drops which mark his manly bosom,  
 Are crimson letters in the splendid roll  
 Which gives a blest eternity to heroes.—  
 Convey him hence; and you, my friends, attend him.

*[Exeunt with the corpse.]*

Thersippus stay. Thou know'st the Spartan's order.  
 Procure me some vile peasant's tatter'd weeds.  
 In vulgar guise, I'll seek their inmost camp;  
 And, spite of ev'ry caution, bless my country.—  
 Hence to the queen. Unfold, in gentlest terms,  
 That Codrus is no more to her an husband.—  
 Tell her 'tis heav'n, 'tis Athens calls me from her.  
 Teach her that friendship must submit to duty;  
 But teach her so as to relieve the wound  
 Ev'n whilst thou mak'st it.—Go.—Again I'll see thee.

*[Exit Thersippus.]*

Let me sit down, and meditate a moment.—  
 If there be gods, there are rewards for virtue.  
 The sage proclaims it; and the voice of nature  
 Speaks, still and clear, Elysian fields beyond us.  
 There goodness only clasps the hand of goodness;  
 There the true diamond leaves the incrustation  
 Which here bedim'd it; and the feign'd gem  
 No more attracts us by fallacious lustre —  
 But I delay.—The trumpet calls to action.—  
 One little hour, and then ye gods I'm ready.

*[Exit.]*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT



A TRAGEDY.

61

ACT V.

SCENE the Palace.

*The scene opens and discovers the body of Adrastus.*

*Enter JOCASTA, her hair dishevel'd.*

JOCASTA.

**H**ITHER I've stol'n, unnotic'd by my friends,  
Once more to visit my belov'd Adrastus.—  
Thou hapless corse, let me survey thy wounds,  
And pour my tears, in vain, upon thy bosom.

*[Leaning upon the corpse.]*

In vain indeed. The yawning wound lies open,  
And bloody torrents have distain'd his armour.—  
Lie there awhile, thou balm of all my sorrows.

*[Producing a dagger.]*

Thou certain passport to those happy regions,  
Where lovers meet, beyond the reach of misery.  
Methinks I trace the blissful plains already  
Where all the sufferings of this upper world  
Shall seem like dreams, the visions of an ev'ning,  
And but inhance the portion of hereafter.—  
I heard a noise, and I shall be prevented.—  
Some faithful friend perhaps may join our ashes.  
I come, Adrastus, never more to leave thee.

*[Stabs herself.]*

It gave no pain. Yet this is all we dread.  
'Tis mere uncertainty that makes us cowards.—  
I'm happy now, and wou'd not live again  
To be the chaff, upon the riv'let's surface,  
Whirl'd round and round by ev'ry gurgling eddy.

*[Sinks upon the corpse.]*

*Enter*

*Enter CEPHISA.*

CEPHISA.

Alas, my fears.—She welters in her gore.—  
Jocasta speak, or art thou gone for ever!

JOCASTA.

My friend, Cephisa, yet a last embrace,  
And close my eyes.—I cou'd not live without him.—  
Take this poor bracelet; it was once of value;  
And wear it as the pledge of one that lov'd thee.—  
I can no more.—Farewell, farewell Cephisa.

[Dies.

CEPHISA.

The fairest flow'r in Athens here lies blasted.—  
How very short is all our boasted prescience!  
How scarce existent all our scenes of happiness!  
This morning's sun shone on the prince's marriage;  
Ere noon the storm is gather'd in the sky;  
And here the thunder has discharg'd its fury,  
Alas, we wish, we eagerly pursue  
We know not what. The phantom of to-day  
Is gone to-morrow; and within those arms,  
In which each grace, and ev'ry pleasure wanton'd,  
Some ugly monster frights us.

*Enter ATALANTA and THERSIPPUS.*

ATALANTA.

More horrors yet!—What have we done, Thersippus,  
Thus to be made the sport of angry providence!

THERSIPPUS.

Horror indeed!—My throbbing heart foretold it.—  
Poor dear Jocasta, in the bloom of life  
Sunk as the violet, in the vale trod down  
By merc'less trav'ler.

ATALANTA.



# A TRAGEDY.

63

ATALANTA.

Heav'n will sure be weary  
When all its store of arrows are expended.—  
How can'st thou here?

THERSIPPUS.

Wast thou, Cephisa, present  
When that dire steel cemented thus their union?

CEPHISA.

I found her dying—sunk upon his corse.  
She rais'd herself, just prest me in her arms,  
Gave me this bracelet as the last of pledges,  
Then swoon'd again, and calmly thus expir'd.

THERSIPPUS.

Poor, dear Jocasta! let me drop a tear,  
One tear parental on thy yet warm corse,  
O'er which at midnight, by pale Cynthia's gleam,  
Shall lovers meet, as pilgrims, at thy tomb  
To scatter flow'rs, and sigh their vows together.

ATALANTA.

Support me heav'n. Ye little know ye crouds,  
Who, dazzled by the vanities of state,  
Gaze up at princes with mistaken wonder,  
How many goads are lodg'd within the breast  
Whose sparkling outside gems have made uneasy.—  
Support me, heav'n, to bear another blow  
More fatal yet.—I cannot, cannot bear it.—  
Yet why unman the partner of my soul,  
Just in the moment when his virtue mounts  
Above mortality?—down, down my struggling passions—  
Help me, Thersippus, help me to receive him.—  
I must, I will, I will not shame my country.—  
Burst, burst my soul, and give my tears a vent,  
Ere I must bid him an adieu for ever.

CEPHISA.

CEPHISA.

Alas! my queen. Oh let me lead you hence.—  
This fight, Thersippus, is too pow'ful for her.

ATALANTA.

These scenes, Cephisa, are no longer dreadful;  
But oh the hour, the fatal hour awaits me  
To stab indeed, to harrow up my soul.—  
Oh! who wou'd wish to sway the reins of empire  
To be conspicuous only in misfortune.

THERSIPPUS.

My monarch's sufferings swallow up my own.  
My Atalanta, wou'd I cou'd assist thee.

ATALANTA.

These were my children, and he was my husband.  
Why do the gods make sport of wretched mortals  
By giving but to snatch their presents from us?  
I've heard, my friends, the histories of women  
Whose godlike deeds have soar'd beyond their sex.  
Tell me some tale of more than common import,  
O'er which loud fame has blown her strongest blast,  
And strive to fix my soul by rare examples.—  
But 'tis in vain. Unfold me Clio's page;  
Her blackest scene is sunshine to my misery.  
Say, didst thou reason; didst thou argue with him?  
Oh say thou didst not. Let one glimmering ray  
Pierce thro' th' uncommon darkness that surrounds me.

THERSIPPUS.

I wou'd have spoke, but he enjoind me silence;  
Religion and his country met together,  
Like lovely twins, embracing.—For his life  
He holds it as a loan, and heav'n his creditor.

ATALANTA.

My griefs are full. Be still my widow'd soul,  
Nor



Nor let the best of husband's dying moments  
Be made more irksome to him.

*Enter an attendant, who delivers Theseus (an infant) to her.*

Poor helpless innocent! Yes, gaze around thee, I bid  
And see what shipwrecks fate has made its pastime!  
Thou know'st it not, but cling'st about my knees  
Willing to please by unavailing innocence.

Dear smiling ignorant! may'st thou never know  
One single pang like what my bosom suffers.  
But thou, alas, thou too art born expos'd  
To all the miseries which attend on grandeur.  
Ev'n now, perhaps, the murderer's bloody knife  
Is lifted o'er thee, rais'd by fell ambition  
To do a deed, th' assassin's guilty blood  
Must curdle at the thought of. Or the gods  
May now demand thee as they do thy father.  
This is the mighty privilege of royalty;  
Whilst the poor shepherd's bantling takes its rest  
Without the caution of surrounding centinels.  
He comes.—My lord.—My falt'ring pulse, a moment  
Bear me; oh bear me thro' this fatal interview!

*Enter CODRUS, MEDON attending him.*

CODRUS.

All-gracious heav'n, this is thy bitterest draught;  
But thou extend'st the cup, and I receive it.

*[He advances to Atalanta, who falls upon his neck. After a pause—]*

Let not, my queen, imagin'd griefs torment thee.  
The die is cast; but those almighty powers

K

Which

Which take me from thee, will be thy protectors.—  
 Thy husband's fame will be an husband to thee;  
 Thy country, Atalanta, be thy debtor.—  
 What I resign are but the dregs of being,  
 A batter'd cottage worthless of repair,  
 And plains of endless glory lie before me.

ATALANTA.

I know thee well. Thy country calls thee, Codrus,  
 And all the sophist's reas'nings now were useless.—  
 I've summon'd up my utmost resolution,  
 And will not, by vain wailings, now disturb thee.

CODRUS to THERSIPPUS.

I see thy daughter has advanc'd before me.  
 My pallid fair-one, thou art my example.  
 Weigh'd down by age, shall I refuse the lot  
 Which blooming youth ev'n now has made its option?  
 Grieve not my queen. My little infant here,  
 For years to come, shall be thy close companion.  
 Instruct him early he had once a parent.  
 Give him a reverence for the powers above us,  
 And tell him that his life is well bestow'd  
 Who bleeds to ward the ruins of his country.

ATALANTA.

My woes benumb me. Oh befriend me heav'n!

CODRUS.

Give me my crown, [To Medon.

to-morrow 'twill be thine.

But think not, Medon, diadems were meant

As tinsel'd pageants merely for the gaze,

The



The wide-mouth'd wonder of a dazzled populace.  
 Poize it in reason's scale thou'lt find it weighty,  
 That 'tis a burthen difficult to bear,  
 And often galls the forehead of its owner.

*Receives the crown, which he places upon the corpse  
 of Adrastus.*

When hence thou tak'st it, let this corpse remind thee  
 What was the tenour of thy brother's virtues.  
 The blasted rose as yet retains its sweetness,  
 And will retain it; but the hateful weed  
 Of pois'nous vice infects the ambient air  
 Long e'er 'tis rooted from the bed that rear'd it.——  
 I know thy follies. Follies, let me call them,  
 Put forth by eager youth:—but, listen, prince,——  
 The smallest speck upon a monarch's ermine  
 Is seen afar, and slander will report it  
 With dark additions of portentous magnitude.——  
 Maturely muse on what is now thy station.  
 All eyes are set at gaze upon the sun,  
 And not an eclipse of the smallest moment  
 Passes unnotic'd, tho' the lesser stars  
 May sometimes rise and set without observance.——  
 Thy mother,——Medon, be a father to her;  
 Support her under all her weight of sorrow,  
 And as thou wishest for a father's blessing,  
 A dying father's, be her best protector.  
 Farewell.—My queen, why dost thou weep?—Farewell,  
 Sweet smiling innocent, farewell for ever.

ATALANTA.

Yet one embrace, my Codrus, e'er we part.  
I've done my utmost. Oh farewell, for ever.

*[She faints into the arms of Cephisa.]*

CODRUS.

My Atalanta!—Oh my queen!—Cephisa!—  
My resolution melts!—I must not stay—  
My country calls—Adieu! adieu for ever!

*[Exit Codrus. The scene closes.]*

SCENE the Spartan camp.

The KING and a Spartan Officer.

KING.

Didst thou observe them nearly?

OFFICER.

As I cou'd,

Within their posts I skulk'd about their trenches;  
The night conceal'd me. Not a voice was heard,  
Save here and there the murmur of a centinel.  
I mark'd their fires, and in my judgment's eye  
Made random computation. My report  
Speaks what I thought them. As to those, my liege,  
Within the town, discovery cou'd not reach them.

KING.

To-morrow's morn e'er sun-rise gives them battle.  
Without a trumpet, let the light-arm'd troops  
March off at midnight to possess the wood  
Thou found'st unoccupied. I keep the center.  
Thou hast the right. Phidippus takes the left;

And



And young Lycurgus heads the troops in ambush.  
 To-night we must not sleep. See ev'ry officer  
 Upon his post at two. Call me at one;  
 Thou'lt find me ready; and take heed the order,  
 Not to offend the person of the king,  
 On pain of death, to ev'ry man in arms,  
 From rank to rank, be e'er we march repeated.—  
 Give me thy hand. I know thy peerless honesty.  
 Thy king has pow'r, and will reward thy services.

[Exit Officer.

That fellow must not live. Yet what's his crime?—  
 His wife has charms to grace a monarch's bed,  
 And he's the dragon bars me from my pleasures.—  
 Audacious wretch! To-morrow I'll bestow him  
 Where e'en a miracle shall vent its pow'r  
 In vain to save him. To-morrow sees him breathless;  
 And I to-morrow mount the sportive bed  
 From whence I've hurl'd him.

*The SPECTRE arises.*

SPECTRE.

I have kept my word.—  
 Know, tyrant, that to-morrow's sun shall rise  
 Upon thy bloated, thy disfigur'd carcase;  
 That crows shall prey upon thy corse to-morrow.—  
 Frown not on me, for I am not thy subject.—  
 Repent thy sins. Thou shalt not see to-morrow.

[The Spectre disappears.

KING.

What ho! my guards. Almighty pow'rs protect me!—  
'Tis gone, and I betray a woman's weakness.

*Enter Guards.*

How wears the day? I send Calchas to my tent;  
Tell him I've business that commands his presence.

*[Guards retire.]*

Gods, how my fear unmans me to my slaves!  
This idle bugbear, which a school-boy's eye  
Wou'd pass unnotic'd, tingles thro' my frame.—  
—Repent thy sins!—Let the poor hind repent them;  
Let him, who toils for bread, repent his transports.  
I'm here a god; and if there be a world  
Where other deities have plac'd their mansions,  
Shall be the fellow of the gods around me.—  
Down, conscience, down! I will not hear thy precepts.

*[Muset.]*

I dare not think. Why cou'd not heav'n make man  
Without the curse of thought?—I'll think no more;  
But wanton down the stream as pleasure prompts me.

*Enter CALCHAS.*

This foolish thing has been again, my Calchas.  
My thoughts are irksome. Let the minstrel come;  
That smiling, warbling, lisping, dear musician.  
A song or two may chide the ling'ring moments,  
I'm not myself, and musick must relieve me.

*[Exit Calchas. The King retires, and the  
scene closes.]*

SCENE



# A TRAGEDY.

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## SCENE the Camp.

### CENTINELS.

*CODRUS enters disguised in a Peasant's Habit, with a Woodman's Hook, bearing Faggots.*

### CODRUS.

Man what art thou, that blind to real merit,  
Canst suffer virtue to abide the stings  
Of cold and penury, whilst the tinsel'd garb  
That glitters on some villain's worthless shoulder,  
Extorts a bow from ev'ry sawning passenger?—  
I find it now.—Thus strip'd of ev'ry gewgaw,  
The village-cur that guards the peasant's door,  
With instant scowlings beckons my approach.  
The man, the man of nought, who yesterday  
Crouch'd for subsistence suppliant at my throne,  
Now takes the wall; and, with his nose upturn'd,  
Scarce deigns to look upon me.—This is man.—  
Nay, as I pass'd the turning of that hedge,  
The wretched caitiff who but drags on life  
Supported by the pittance pity gives,  
Let me trudge on untold of his distress,  
Nor call'd on heav'n to show'r its blessings on me.  
What am I worse than when the ermin'd robe,  
The sculptur'd scepter, and the gem-deck'd diadem,  
Call'd for the wonder of the crouds around me?  
In virtue's eye, methinks, I'm something greater;

And

And these poor toys I quit with equal scorn  
 To that, with which the infant spurns his rattle,  
 When manhood's dawn prompts him to something higher.  
 —Beneath that tree the hardy veteran waits me.  
 He does his duty, and I do but mine;  
 He fights for Sparta, and I die for Athens.  
 Perhaps in merit he may be superior;  
 Yet whilst he falls amongst the croud unnotic'd,  
 And not a stone shall tell his little history,  
 My name shall echo to the quiv'ring lyre,  
 And never-dying annals speak my praises.

*[He advances to the centinels.]*

CENTINEL.

Stand, countryman. Who art thou?

CODRUS.

An Athenian,

And thus I write my name upon thy bosom.

*[He wounds one of the centinels with the book;  
 they fight, and Codrus falls.]*

Immortal guardians of the just! I thank you.

Athens is safe.—My honest friends, I thank you.

I feel it here.—I have not long to live.

*Enter a Spartan Officer.*

OFFICER.

What means this murder?

CENTINEL.

Good, my lord, we know not.

This I receiv'd,

*[Pointing to his wound.]*

and now he's down he thanks us.

CODRUS.



— *Enter* CODRUS.

Convey this dying message to your sovereign.  
Tell him these honest men have done their duty ;  
That these vile weeds, and that poor foldier's wound,  
Induc'd them ;—oh !—to do an act forbidden.—  
Tell him—I'm Codrus—dying for my country.—  
I'm nothing now.—Ye gods !—remember Athens.

[*He dies.*]

OFFICER.

In vain we struggle when the fates oppose us.

*Enter the KING.*

Alas, my sov'reign ! see the king of Athens !

KING.

Perdition seize the felon gave the blow.—  
The gods declare they aid the cause of Athens ;  
And let them aid it ; for, be witness, heav'n,  
I know my pow'r, and scorn to crave assistance.  
Is it for this libations have been pour'd ?  
For this my herds have sunk beneath the knife ?  
For this my Augurs ta'en their daily auspices ?  
But mark me, gods ! that I renounce your aid.  
Here, like a stubborn oak, I'll root myself ;  
Nor shall your thunders make me change my purpose.  
Here, like a rock, 'gainst which the wild waves roar,  
I'll stand your brunt, and meet your utmost fury.—  
—Spurn that vile carcase to the dogs and vultures ;  
And let the miscreant know, that trusts in providence,  
On what a feeble stay he builds his happiness.

[*Shouts. An alarm without.*]

L

What

What means that noise?—louder and louder still!—

It comes this way!—again!—defend me, Jupiter!

*Enter an OFFICER.*

OFFICER.

To arms, my lord; the foes possess the camp.

The mad young prince is at the battle's head,

And e'en your hardiest veterans quit the combat.

*[Shout victory. Soldiers pass the stage as from the battle. Trumpets.]*

KING.

Where shall I fly!—Assist me, gracious heav'n!—

Curse on this garb; this tawdry badge of royalty

Intended only to betray its wearer!—

Give me my lance! Do ye desert me, scoundrels!

Thus can you leave your monarch to his fortune?

They love me not, and therefore they betray me.

*Enter MEDON, Officers and Soldiers.*

MEDON.

The day is ours.—Almighty gods! I thank you.—

Ha! what art thou that bear'st a royal semblance?—

—I know thee now, and Codrus calls revenge.—

Defend thyself, and do not fall ignobly.

*[They fight. The Spartan monarch falls.]*

The KING.

I have it deep—and by a stripling's hand—

Damnation! oh!—Ye pow'rs I here renounce you—

Befriend me, heav'n!—I'm sick to dissolution—

Confusion!—oh!—ye gods forgive, forgive me! *[Dies.]*

MEDON.



# A TRAGEDY.

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## MEDON.

There, there my soldiers, fled his caitiff soul;  
 This evening gives back liberty to Athens.—  
 But see my father's bloody pallid carcase.  
 Let me adore thy dear, thy blest remains.—  
 He smiles in death; for such a death was victory.  
 Old men will tell the story to their sons;  
 And they again repeat it to their children.—  
 —Take up the corse, and bear it to the city;  
 And let the virgins, as they meet his herse,  
 In solemn dirges speak the praise of Liberty.

He only lives, who nobly dares to die,  
 A death like this is immortality.

VOS-VALETE ET PLAUDITE.

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## E R R A T A.

- Page 3. l. 9. *for must, read much.*  
 6. l. 8. *for yet, read still.*  
 39. l. 21. *for he rode, read and rode.*  
 55. l. 22. *for pay, read pays.*  
 l. 31. *for I am, read I'm.*  
 60. l. 25. *for feign'd, read feigned.*

